Pieter Bruegel the Elder:

Art Discourse in the Sixteenth-Century Netherlands

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Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *Peasant Wedding Banquet* (detail), 1568, oil on panel. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum.

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To my wife, Leigh

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Preface

Many scholars much more learned than myself, beginning with Karel van Mander in 1604, have continuously mined the paintings of Pieter Bruegel the Elder for insights into their meaning, socio-political commentary, religious dogma, and artistic invention. Scholars are no doubt repeatedly drawn to Bruegel's work due to the diversity of his style and medium (from Boschian drolleries to representations of landscape to complex compositions of monumental figures, presented in drawing, print, watercolor and oil on panel), as well as his unequivocal influence on the subsequent development of Netherlandish art through the seventeenth century. Events during the unique period in which the artist practiced add fuel to this attraction: the Protestant Reformation, political revolt, economic change and expansion, humanist scholarship and new artistic exchange between various regions of Europe. In order to gain a deeper understanding of some of these issues, for the last four years I have zoomed my research lens to focus on a small portion of Bruegel's oeuvre—three paintings and one print produced in the last two years of his life, in 1568-1569. However, by limiting myself to a discussion of four of Bruegel's images, I have endeavored to apply the questions and conclusions my research develops to sketch a broader understanding, not only of the artist himself but also of the vibrant artistic dialogue occurring in the Netherlands during the sixteenth century.

Since the spring of 2003, I have had the opportunity to present my research at a number of different conferences and universities. The feedback I received helped to further sharpen and develop my ideas about Bruegel. I am particularly grateful to the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, the art history department of the University of California, Berkeley and the participants of the *Oude Beeldende Kunst* research group at Leiden University.

A proverb states that "No man is his craft's master the first day." While I have certainly not mastered the craft of art history, hard work and good teaching have brought me a long way during my graduate studies. I would like to take a moment to express my sincere appreciation for the innovative, energetic training and constant support I have received from a number of people and institutions. Since Leiden

academic tradition prevents me from naming the senior faculty members who have guided me, I will simply state that I have been fortunate to have had such quality mentoring and engaged supervision. Repeatedly, I have been taught what art history *can* be—a vibrant, dynamic and interdisciplinary interaction with the visual culture of a particular time and place. I have been intellectually challenged and pushed, many times despite my own protests, and the dissertation that follows would be much different without their leadership. The Pallas Research Institute (Leiden), the Leiden Art History Department, particularly my colleagues in *Oude Beeldende Kunst*, and my fellow doctoral students Jessica Buskirk, Joost Keizer, Almut Pollmer and Bertram Kaschek, have been a constant source of inspiration, confirmation and guidance.

It would have been impossible for me to have completed my dissertation without the enduring love and support from my family and friends. During the process, my courageous wife, Leigh, moved across the United States to California and across the Atlantic to the Netherlands, learned to navigate the unique cultures of Berkeley and Leiden, gave birth to our daughter in a foreign land and still found the time to encourage and sustain me in a period of constant questioning and uncertainty. I also thank my parents and brother for their unfailing support in many different ways. Finally, I would like to express my deep appreciation to the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, J. William Fulbright Scholarship and the Pallas Research Institute for funding my four years of research and writing.

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Introduction

My dissertation addresses two types of conversations that took place in the Netherlands during the middle of the sixteenth century which were independent of one another, yet significantly related. The first, and primary, discourse I am concerned with is the purely visual interaction between artists and artistic practices that unfolds in pictures. To this end, I am particularly interested in the way artists cite or mediate in their work visual concepts or pictorial elements from other artists or artistic traditions, often translating both form and content from one context into another. The secondary conversation that is fundamental to these exchanges is the dialogue that occurred between viewers in front of pictures and the way in which pictorial strategies facilitated their visual experience and challenged their analytical capabilities. At issue in the former is the creative process of the artist; at issue in the latter are the habits of mind brought to the act of looking, and what questions or revelations the image was likely to have addressed or inspired for its contemporary viewers.

The *Pancake Eaters* (1560, fig. 1) by Pieter Aertsen (1509-1575), now at the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen in Rotterdam, is one example of a visual discourse that invites speculation about art theoretical ideas. The painting depicts a family of peasants gathered in front of a hearth in which a blazing fire burns. Plates of stacked waffles and pancakes, along with other foods, are prominently displayed in the foreground. Each figure's gaze claims its own space and their facial expressions are reserved and thoughtful. No matter what the peasants' actions may be, their demeanor exudes dignity. The painting is striking not so much because of what is represented, rather by how the peasants are composed. In the first half of the sixteenth century, the practice of depicting peasants tended to be rather caricatural: a stocky physique, sometimes to the point of being misformed, with clumsy posture and dazed facial expressions that are rarely individualized.[1] For example, Keith Moxey describes the peasant figures of Sebald Beham (1500-1550) as having a "depersonalized air." "Far

[1] See for example, Hans Joachim Raupp, *Bauernsatiren: Entstehung und Entwicklung des bäuerlichen Genres in der deutschen und niederländischen Kunst ca. 1470-1570*, Niederzier: Lukassen, 1986 and Paul Vandenbroeck, *Beeld van de ander, vertoog over het zelf. Over wilden en narren, boeren en bedelaars*, Exhibition Catalogue, Antwerp: Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, 1987.

from representing particular individuals," Moxey explains, "the Beham peasants seem to repeat basic types, using different gestures and clothing as the principle means of differentiating them."[2] A typical illustration of this type of figure and facial characterization can be seen in Cornelis Massys's (1510-1556) depiction of the *Egg Dance* (1558, fig. 2). To some extent Aertsen's peasants conform to this practice, but the group in his *Pancake Eaters* resembles, thematically and compositionally, a type of painting in the sixteenth century depicting a bourgeois family sitting at a table. But, as Reindert Falkenburg explains, in the sixteenth century, the portrait, insofar as it did not portray monarchs or aristocrats and clerics, was the prerogative of the bourgeois patricians; the lower classes did not yet appear.[3] Nevertheless, Aertsen's painting makes a strong impression of following the idiom of the contemporary bourgeois family, as Maarten van Heemskerck (1498-1574) depicts in his painting of *Pieter Jan Foppesz and his family* (fig. 3). In the *Pancake Eaters,* the peasants in particular have such an individual physiognomy and are painted with such meticulousness that it seems we are dealing with portraits of individual personalities worthy of being portrayed.[4]

An additional, yet puzzling, component to this unique portrayal is the face of the child on the right, which is of a Leonardesque type. The features are particularly distinct when his large round cheeks and forehead, as well as his curly red hair, are compared to the other four figures in the picture. Even the bronze tone of the child's fair, smooth skin is divergent from the sunburned leathery faces of his family. The reference is probably taken from a Leonardo design in which two children embrace and

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[2] Keith Moxey, *Peasants, Warriors and Wives: Popular Imagery in the Reformation*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press (1989), 65.
[3] Falkenburg, "Pieter Aertsen, Rhyparographer," in J. Koopmans, et al (ed.), *Rhetoric-Rhétoriquers-Rederijkers*, Amsterdam: Koninklije Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen (1995), 197-218.
[4] Ibid., 211. See also M.B. Buchan, *The Paintings of Pieter Aertsen*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, Institute of Fine Arts (1975), 146. J. Held, "Dr. Friedländer's Scholarly Study of Early Flemish and Dutch Painting," *Art in America*, vol. 27 (1939), 81-82, notes the social status of Aertsen's kitchen maids – "[who] move about like heroines in a classical play"– unembroidered with the "esthetic standards [taken] from a social layer quite distinct from that of his actual models." G.J. Hoogewerff, *De Noord-Nederlandsche Schilderkunst*, vol. IV, Den Haag (1941-2), 531, speaks of a "robustly, classical" kitchen maid, and claims that the Brussels painting "is dated in the antique-Roman manner"; R. Genaille, "L'oeuvre de Pieter Aertsen," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, vol. 44 (1954), 278, characterized the kitchen maid as an "aristocratic portrait." Sources cited from Falkenburg, "Pieter Aertsen's *Kitchen Maid* in Brussels: a Peek into the Kitchen of Art," in J.F. van Dijkhuizen, P.G. Hoftijzer, J. Roding, (eds.), *Living in Posterity: Essays in Honour of Bart Westerweel*, Hilversum: Verloren (2004), 95-105.

kiss one another, as can be seen in a depiction of *St. John Kissing the Christ Child* by Joos van Cleve (1485-1540), who also follows the Italian artist's example (1525-1530, fig. 4,5,6).[5]

The presence of this Italianate depiction in Aertsen's peasant painting is striking considering that the subject matter is usually described by modern scholars as belonging to a particularly indigenous mode—the peasant as subject is an exclusively Northern phenomenon in the mid-sixteenth century and did not exist in, for example, Italy.[6] If Aertsen's pictorial reference to St. John kissing Christ would have been recognized by his viewers, the artistic quote does not only refer to the Leonardesque face but also, albeit in an ironic manner, to the face of the Christ Child and the motif of the kissing. The comparison to the model as represented in van Cleve's painting helps to highlight the close vicinity of the pancake held up to the child's face by the peasant man behind him, which is roughly of the same size as his head. Whereas van Cleve's Baptist kisses Christ, Aertsen's pictorial quotation shows affection for a pancake.[7] For period viewers, the pancake may have even helped to make the specific connection between Aertsen's motif and the Leonardesque design. After all, pancakes and faces were not always mutually exclusive, as is apparent in a seventeenth-century depiction of a *Boy with Pancake* (fig. 7) by Godfried Schalcken (1643-1706). However, even if the model of two children kissing, whether taken directly from Leonardo or through van Cleve, would have been lost on Aertsen's audience, what is clear in the painting is that Aertsen juxtaposes the child's face with a pancake—Italian style with a food that is quintessentially Dutch.

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[5] On the influence of Leonardo for Joos van Cleve, see John Oliver Hand, *Joos van Cleve: The Complete Paintings*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004.

[6] See Falkenburg, "Pieter Aertsen: Rhyparographer" (1995); Keith Moxey, *Pieter Aertsen, Joachim Beuckelaer, and the Rise of Secular Painting in the Context of the Reformation*, New York, London: Garland, 1977.

[7] Aertsen makes a habit of "counter-imaging" inanimate objects such as food or architecture and the human body. For a more detailed discussion of this practice, especially as it pertains to this painting, see Reindert Falkenburg's article in Annette de Vries (ed.), *Cultural Mediators. Artists and Writers at the Crossroads of Tradition, Innovation and Reception in the Low Countries and Italy 1450-1650*, Leuven: Peeters Publishers, forthcoming 2007. See also Falkenburg, "Pieter Aertsen's *Kitchen Maid* in Brussels" (2004); "Pieter Aertsens *Alter Marktverkäufer*: Imitatio artis als Paradox," in Jürgen Müller (ed.), *Imitatio Artis - Formen künstlerischer Aneigung in der Frühen Neuzeit*, München, forthcoming; "*Alter Einoutus*. Over de aard en herkomst van Pieter Aertsens stilleven-conceptie*," Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek,* vol. 40 (1989), 41-66.

Since the publications of James Marrow and Rudolf Preimesberger, art historians have begun to embrace the idea that not only Italian but also Northern artists in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries offered their own works as a self-referential field of discourse on artistic matters.[8] Artists were well aware that there were more than one opinion about how a painting should look and function, and they expressed their own beliefs about these theoretical issues in their works of art rather than in texts. However, this possibility has hardly been explored for painters working in an emphatically native mode, such as Aertsen and Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1525-1569). Aertsen specifically mediates a Leonardesque form from a biblical story within a painting of local rustic life, juxtaposing the quotation of Italianate style with a food that is representative of the Netherlands; if there is such a thing as a Dutch vernacular victual, pancakes would be it. It is a poignant example of the way in which an artist employs a style that was known to have originated in one region with a subject that was indigenious to another, not simply as a means of representation but more fundamentally as a comment on artistic ideas *per se*. For example, this pairing can be viewed as visual commentary on the reception of Italianate ideals in Northern art. The juxtaposition, coupled with the dignified formal presentation of a peasant family, not only confronts two artistic traditions with one another but also highlights an inter-pictorial discourse that addresses style and raises questions about artistic practice and assumptions regarding the relationship of form and content. It is one representation among many that illustrates the analytical approach to art that is an important component of the visual culture of this period.[9] Later, I will explain how this emphasis on analytical discourse is not reserved just to artists and their work, but equally characterizes the context of viewing.

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[8] See J.H. Marrow, "Symbol and Meaning in the Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and the Early Renaissance," *Simiolus*, vol. 16 (1986), 150-169 and "Artistic Identity in Early Netherlandish Painting: The Place of Rogier van der Weyden's St. Luke Drawing the Virgin," in C.J. Purtle (ed.), *Rogier van der Weyden, St. Luke Drawing the Virgin. Selected Essays in Context*, Turnhout (1997), 53-57; Rudolph Preimesberger, "Zu Jan van Eycks Diptychon der Sammlung Thyssen-Bornemisza," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, vol. 54 (1991), 459-489. See also Heike Schlie, *Bilder des Corpus Christi. Sakramentaler Realismus von Jan van Eyck bis Hieronymus Bosch*, Berlin 2002; Victor Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image: An Insight Into Early Modern Meta-Painting*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997; Joseph Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

[9] For a similar discussion on the critical visual reception of the work of Albrecht Dürer by Hans Baldung Grien, see Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, *The Eloquent Artist: Essays on Art, Art Theory and Architecture, Sixteenth to Nineteenth Century*, London: Pindar Press (2004), 1-32.

Aertsen's painting offers a clear example of one type of conversation that my dissertation examines. Specifically, I focus on Bruegel's later depictions of peasants and festivities, particularly the way in which they reveal a similar inter-pictorial discourse about art theoretical issues—how a painting should look and function. But, before transitioning from Aertsen to Bruegel, I would like to define in more detail three important terms (one of which I have already used to characterize aspects of Aertsen's painting) that will reappear throughout this study in relation to Bruegel's work: Italianate, vernacular and history painting (or *historia*). By Italianate, I mean an aspect of a painting that follows a form or style defined in Renaissance Italy. Therefore, whether the face of the child in Aertsen's *Pancake Eaters* is taken directly from Leonardo or through a Northern artist such as van Cleve, it is still Italianate. This distinction is important because in the following chapters I will argue that Bruegel mediates, among other things, Italianate pictorial elements and/or visual concepts from history painting into his later work depicting peasants and festivities. However, I do not necessarily mean that he is directly referencing Italian artists. Rather, he could have taken up Italianate ideas employed by many of his Northern contemporaries, such as Frans Floris (1519/20-1570), Michel Coxie (1499-1593), Martin de Vos (1532-1603) or Maarten van Heemskerck.

The term vernacular has long been used to describe a language that is indigenous to a particular people or region. Whether a language is described as native, mother tongue or the vernacular, these descriptors are made possible only by one culture being aware that other languages exist. The use of the word vernacular consciously distinguishes one culture's own language from that of another. The term has also recently been adopted by modern art historians to describe native artistic practices.[10] In late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century northern Europe, by comparison, the distinction of local artistic custom or a visual vernacular is made

[10] Mark Meadow, "Bruegel's *Procession to Calvary*, Æmulatio and the Space of Vernacular Style," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, vol. 46, Zwolle: Wanders (1996), 181-205 and "Aertsen's Christ in the House of Martha and Mary, Serlio's Architecture and the Meaning of Location," in Jelle Koopmans, et al. (eds.) *Rhetoric – Rhétoriqueurs – Rederijkers*, Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen (1995), 177; David Freedberg, "Allusion and Topicality in the Work of Pieter Bruegel: The Implications of a Forgotten Polemic," in D. Freedberg (ed.), *The Prints of Pieter Bruegel the Elder*, Tokyo (1989), 53-65. The same is true for scholars working on Italian art; one example is a recent lecture by Charles Dempsey at the Max Planck Institut, Florence, "The Origins of Vernacular Style in Renaissance Art: The Invention of Simone Martini's *Maesta*," July 3, 2006.

possible, at least in part, by the influx of a classicist, Italian art into the region; the community becomes aware of another, radically different, visual language. To paint in a vernacular style, then, becomes a conscious choice; in the sixteenth-century, Northern artists are aware of their own artistic practices as such—Northern—in contrast, or even in opposition, to the styles and/or subjects of art emerging out of Italy. One example of vernacular art in the North that I will specifically address is the portrayal of peasant life as the primary subject within panel painting.

Although I will discuss the term vernacular in greater detail in Chapter One, especially as it has been used by modern scholars to describe Bruegel's art, I would like to acknowledge here that it is a concept that people in the sixteenth century would have most likely reserved for a discussion of language and not applied to the visual arts. Artists and humanist writers in the Netherlands during this period, such as Dominicus Lampsonius (1532-1599) and Lucas de Heere (1534-1584), were fully aware of native Netherlandish artistic practices that were distinct from other regions, especially in regards to the visual prominence given to landscape, but whether or not they would have understood their visual tradition as a kind of vernacular visual language can only remain speculation.[11] Of course, the question immediately arises, then, why use the term now if they did not use it then? In the end, I have chosen to employ the term, because I will argue that one way to better understand the visual discourse that is represented in Bruegel's art is in comparison to the motivations and mechanisms of the humanist agenda for the cultivation of the vernacular language. I propose this agenda—especially as it is illustrated in the work of the French poet Clément Marot, the program of the Pléiade poets and, through their influence, De Heere and the rhetorician societies—as a comparative model for describing similar practices of artistic enrichment that is presented in Bruegel's art.

If one aspect of Bruegel's means for artistic cultivation is based on the mediation of visual concepts and pictorial elements from history painting into scenes of everyday rustic life, it is important, then, to briefly define what exactly the term

[11] See Walter Melion, *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon: Karel van Mander's Schilder-boeck*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991. See also Michael Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany*, New Haven: Yale University Press (1980), esp. 135-142 where he discusses the terms *Welsch* (denoting the Latin or Romance, Italian or French) and *Deutsch* (German–as-opposed-to-*Welsch*) as stylistic descriptors. Whereas *Welsch*, according to Baxandall, is identifiable, the *Deutsch* is less clearly so, but nevertheless a category of the time.

history painting, or *historia*, refers to, at least in the context of this study. The concept is complex and somewhat controversial, but is understood, in general, to be a story articulated by figures. *Historia* refers to both the 'what' and the 'how' of a painting. It not only describes a representation of history—whether biblical, political or mythological—but also a substantial, even ambitious, work of art in which several monumental figures are placed in meaningful relation to one another through gestures, movement and expressions, without ever losing sight of the composition as a whole, in order to structure the narrative portrayed.[12]

In his description of the term in *On Painting*, the Italian humanist Leon Battista Alberti had in mind frescoes and other large-scale, publicly commissioned works. History paintings were the artist's "most capacious" and "highest" task. They were carefully composed pictures, in which a substantial number of figures—ideally nine—appeared. Anthony Grafton explains that the Latin term *historia*, which Alberti used, calls to mind one of the central products of humanistic rhetoric: the written narrative of a kingdom's origins, or a monarch's reign, or a battle. Cicero described history as *opus oratorium maxime*—"the supreme work of the orator"—and Alberti made clear that he had this definition in mind when he called the historia "the greatest work of the painter."[13]

In northern Europe, the sixteenth-century German theorist Gualtherus Rivius adopted Alberti's thesis and argued for the creation of "*Histori*" paintings as the prime task of the painter.[14] In his Schilder-boeck of 1604, Karel van Mander described history painting as "the most distinguished part of the arts, that is, the positioning of

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[12] The literature on the concept of *historia* is extensive. See Anthony Grafton, *Leon Battista Alberti: Master Builder of the Italian Renaissance*, London: Penguin Press, 2000; A. Grafton, "*Historia* and *Istoria* : Alberti's terminology in context," *I Tatti studies*, vol. 8 (2000), 37-68; Thomas Puttfarken, *The Discovery of Pictorial Composition*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000; Jack M. Greenstein, *Mantegna and Painting as Historical Narrative*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press (1992), esp. 35-58; Charles Rosenberg, "Raphael and the Florentine *Istoria*," in James Beck (ed.), *Raphael Before Rome, Studies in the History of Art*, vol. 17 (1986), 175-187; Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting*, London: Penguin Books, 1972. Michael Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971. See also Carl van de Velde, "Aspeckte der Historienmalerei in Antwerpen in der zweiten Hälfte des 16. Jahrhunderts," in Ekkehard Mai and Hans Vlieghe (eds.), *Von Bruegel bis Rubens*, Köln: Verlag Locher (1992), 71-78.

[13] A. Grafton, *Leon Battista Alberti* (2000), 127.

[14] De Costa Kaufmann, *The Eloquent Artist* (2004), 55; See Gualtherus Rivius, *Der furnembsten, notwenigsten der gantzen Architektur angehörigen Mathematischen und mechanischen Künst, eigentlicher Bericht*, Nuremberg (1547), fol. BB 1r, BBB 2rff.

the human figure, and with it ultimately the embracing of all corollary particulars."[15] Although it is unclear to what degree Alberti's discussion of *historia* in *On Painting* influenced artists, whether in Italy or the North, what is certain is that the Italian example of what painting should be—as represented in, for example, the work of Michelangelo and Raphael (a style that is itself based on classical art)—was taken up by Northern artists in the beginning of the sixteenth century.[16] Just one case among many others is Jan van Scorel's *Baptism of Christ* from 1530, now in Haarlem, in which he patterns many of his figural constructions after a design by Michelangelo. This development also characterizes the work of other well-known Northern artists such as Jan Gossaert, Coxie, Floris and Heemskerck.[17] Whereas in much of Bruegel's previous work, such as the Series of the Seasons or *Netherlandish Proverbs*, one could say that the artist constructs the landscape or architectural setting as the primary visual force that guides the viewer's gaze and develops the narrative, in his later peasant paintings it is the construction and distribution of monumental figures that perform this task. The difference between these paintings by Bruegel and those of Floris, Heemskerck and the others is the subject matter for which this mode is employed.

One of the ways Bruegel participated in the visual discourse of his time was the unique manner he dealt with the influx of Italian art into the Netherlands. By the mid-sixteenth century, differing opinions among Northern artists about this "new" art seems to have created a kind of polemic between a more ornate, classicizing style of painting and another mode which rejected such models and looked instead to local traditions for its inspiration.[18] Until now, scholars have characterized Bruegel as an advocate of the latter school, arguing that his work adheres to an emphatically "vernacular style" that

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[15] "het besonderste deel der Consten, te weten, een Menschlijck beeldt te leeren stellen, oock eyndlijck alle ander omstandighe deelen t'omhelsen." As translated by Walter Melion, *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon* (1991), 194.

[16] In Lampsonius's *Vita* of Lambert Lombard, published in 1565 by Hubert Goltzius, he makes a passing reference to Alberti.

[17] On the interaction of these artists and Italian influences, see Raphael de Smedt (ed.), *Michel Coxcie, pictor regis (1499-1592)*, International Colloquium, Mechelen, June 5-6, 1992, Mechelen: Koninklijke Kring voor Oudheidkunde, Letteren en Kunst van Mechelen, 1993; Carl van de Velde, *Frans Floris (1519/20-1570): Leven en Werken*, Brussels: Paleis der Academiën, 1975; Ilja Veldman, *Maarten van Heemskerck and Dutch Humanism in the Sixteenth-Century*, Maarssen: Gary Schwartz, 1977; Adelheid Reinsch, *Die Zeichnungen des Marten de Vos: stilistische und ikonographische Untersuchungen*, Bamberg, 1967; Ariane Mensger, *Jan Gossaert: die niederländische Kunst zu Beginn der Neuzeit*, Berlin: Reimer, 2002.

[18] Freedberg, "Allusion and Topicality" (1989), 63. See also Meadow, "Procession to Calvary," (1996) and "Aertsen's Christ in the House of Martha and Mary" (1995).

embraces the "natural life of Brabant."[19] However, building on preliminary suggestions by Carl Gustaf Stridbeck, I turn to the program of the Pléiade poets in France, a group of seven lyric poets who campaigned for the cultivation and use of the vernacular language instead of classical Latin, as a comparable model for understanding Bruegel's unique position in the visual discussion.[20]

These French poets, including Joachim Du Bellay (1522-1560) and Pierre de Ronsard (1524-1585), subscribed to the humanist practice of embracing the themes and forms of classical literature, but rejected the propogation of Latin as the only language for artistic and scholarly expression. They considered it their responsibility to defend the vernacular and advocate its use by showing that it was just as capable of copious, apt and ornate expression as were the languages of Antiquity.[21] They advocated a higher and better style by encouraging the translation and imitation of the ancients and Italians into their native tongue. Whereas the vernacular had fallen into disrepute by following usage or custom, classical Latin is regulated by principles of rhetoric and poetry. To further develop the vernacular language, therefore, was a matter of integrating these artistic principles as much as custom as regulating factors. The ideal was not one of crude imitation of outward appearance, but of a poet so well-versed in the inner principles that had guided the composition of Ancient literature that he would be able to imaginatively mediate these forms to restructure the vernacular in new and inventive ways.[22] Despite the fact that the Pléiade program originated in France, it was also highly influential for writers in the North, such as Lucas de Heere and Jan van der Noot (1540-1595). Furthermore, these men were prominent members of the Antwerp *rederijkerskamer* (rhetorician's society) in the 1560's, an organization that combined

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[19] Ibid, Freedberg and Meadow. See also Max Friedländer, *From Van Eyck to Bruegel*, London: Phaidon (1969), 136, where he disputes that Bruegel was a student of Pieter Coecke van Aelst and that he was never trained by a professional panel painter.

[20] Although he did not elaborate, Stridbeck was the first to propose a connection between the "Romanism" in Bruegel's art and the program of the Pléiade group. At first he asserts an antagonistic relationship between Bruegel and Italianate, classicist forms and ideas, one that inspires a "nationalist" reaction against foreign influence. But, by situating Bruegel's work in the context of the Pléiade he describes artistic interaction that is better understood as validation or cultivation. I will expand on this suggestion and show that it is an appropriate one; Carl Gustaf Stridbeck, *Bruegelstudien: Untersuchungen zu den ikonologischen Problemen bei Pieter Bruegel d. Ä. sowie dessen Beziehungen zum niederländischen Romanismus*, Soest: Davaco Publishers (1977), 288. See also Meadow, "Bruegel's *Procession to Calvary* (1996), 198.

[21] Grahame Castor, *Pléiade Poetics: A Study in Sixteenth-Century Thought and Terminology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1964), 8.

[22] Ibid.

with artists to form the same guild—topics I will take up in greater detail in Chapter One.

By offering a close visual analysis of Bruegel's later peasant paintings—*Peasant Wedding Banquet*, *Peasant Dance* and *Peasant and Nest Robber* (1568, all in Vienna)—as well as his design of the *Festival of Fools*, compared to the particular way the Pléiade poets and rederijkers enrich the vernacular language, I will expand the notion of vernacular style and argue that Bruegel's cultivation of it is far from a rejection of classicist, Italianate influences. Rather, these paintings reveal an intricate visual discourse that mediates form, style and iconography from Italianate and Antique sources into scenes of sixteenth-century rustic life in the Netherlands (or, said in another way, artful Latinate components into a Northern visual vernacular). To counter the claim that Bruegel's later works represent an indigenous idiom that eschews foreign influence, I discuss in greater detail their hybrid nature, 'artfully' depicting the 'natural' life of Brabant, and argue that similar to the cultivation and use of the vernacular language instead of Latin, these pictures simultaneously question the uncritical acceptance of artistic practices and assumptions defined in Italy and push for the possibility of incorporating these very principles into what was increasingly recognized as a Northern idiom.

This artistic agenda could also have been understood by Bruegel's viewers as a response to the hierarchical ordering of the visual arts, a classical scheme of prioritizing artistic modes articulated by, among others, Pliny the Elder and revived in Italy during the fifteenth century. Pliny describes under the category of lesser painting (*minoris picturae*) the work of artists who depicted humbler subjects, such as the *rhyparographoi* and *anthropographoi,* painters of sordid subjects and human beings, what we might now call still-life and genre painters.[23] This mode is in contrast to the more prestigious representation of history; in classical discussions on style this referred to naval battles or cavalry engagements, but Alberti adds to this list mythological

[23] De Costa Kaufmann, *The Eloquent Artist* (2004), 54. See also Larry Silver, *Peasant Scenes and Landscapes: The Rise of Pictorial Genres in the Antwerp Art Market*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press (2006), esp. 87-102; Falkenburg, "Pieter Aertsen: Rhyparographer" (1995); Norman Bryson, *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983.

subjects.[24] Likewise, Sebastian Serlio (1475-1554) drew distinctions when he described the stage setting for comic, tragic and satyric scenes, designs which became popular references for Northern artists after they were published by the widow of Pieter Coecke van Aelst in 1553.[25] Serlio's description of the stages imposes a social hierarchy upon the dramatic genres: the tragic set includes the "stately homes of great personages, for the actions of love, strange adventures and cruel murders (as you read in ancient and modern tragedies) happen always in the houses of great lords, Dukes, Princes and Kings"; the comedic set takes place in a street scene that includes all aspects of life—a great inn, church, private homes, brothel, etc.; and the satyric features "gente rustica" in a wooded natural setting complete with rustic cabins.[26]

No doubt that with the influx of Italian designs into the Netherlands during the sixteenth century, concepts and theories about art revived from antiquity also made their way north of the Alps. Designs from Italy were born along some of the same routes by which knowledge of classicizing humanism reached northern Europe. As a result, this art (and I would add here ideas about art) carried with it the prestigious associations granted to all remnants and revivals of classical culture by the humanists.[27] Whereas in Italy up to the mid-sixteenth century the hierarchical ordering of the visual arts seems to be a consistent topic of theoretical discussion, supported by more developed ideas on the subject in rhetorical and poetic theory, such distinctions, whether in theory or practice, were still undefined during this period in the North, both among artists and viewers. Reindert Falkenburg, Mark Meadow and other scholars have noted that the issue of genre in general is a particularly fraught one for Netherlandish art.[28] For example, Dominicus Lampsonius, in a letter to Giorgio

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[24] Ibid., 55. On Alberti's inclusion of mythology as *historia*, see A. Grafton, *Leon Battista Alberti* (2000), 127.

[25] See also E.H. Gombrich, "The Renaissance Theory of Art and the Rise of Landscape," *Norm and Form*, London: Phaidon Press (1971), 119-121; Jan Białostocki, "Das Modus-Problem in den bildenden Künsten," *Stil und Ikonographie*, Dresden: Fundus-Bücher (1966), 9-33.

[26] *The Book of Architecture by Sebastiano Serlio, London, 1611*, New York: Arno Press, 1980. This English version was translated directly from the Dutch 1553 version, which is a complete and accurate translation of Serlio's original text. See also Barnard Hewitt (ed.), *The Renaissance Stage: Documents of Serlio, Sabbattini and Furttenbach*, Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press, 1958.

[27] Meadow, "Bruegel's *Procession to Calvary*" (1996), 182.

[28] Ibid. See also Meadow, "Aertsen's Christ in the House of Martha and Mary" (1995); Falkenburg, "Pieter Aertsen: Ryparographer" (1995); Silver, *Peasant Scenes and Landscapes* (2006); Beveryly Louise Brown, "Genre and Meaning: Crosscurrents Between Venice and the North," in Bernard Aikema and Beverly Louise Brown (eds.), *Renaissance Venice and the North*, London: Thames and Hudson

Vasari, argues that landscape, deemed by Italians to be of a lesser mode, is the proper glory of the Belgians and is equally important to the painted *historia*.[29] Furthermore, we know that in the middle of the sixteenth century in the Netherlands, terms such as "landscape" or "peasant scene" were used by notaries to describe pictures in a specific inventory, but these terms did not delineate status nor did they describe how a viewer should visually experience a painting, as is the case for modern categories of art. Bruegel's mediation of visual concepts and pictorial elements from history painting into everyday life could have functioned not only to construct and enrich a native style but also would have created a tension that led his viewers, and fellow artists, to critically assess the artistic standards and assumptions about the hierarchical ordering of the visual arts.[30]

Bruegel's inter-pictorial dialogue entails both conscious quotes of well-known motifs—position and structure of figures, attributes or compositions—as well as notions of artistic and theoretical style in Italy and Flanders (i.e., issues of decorum). This practice of mediation not only raises questions for sixteenth-century viewers about artistic representation *per se* but also calls on—indeed, is dependant on—various levels of viewer awareness—literary, religious and artistic—during the process of visual analysis. The pictures are put together in such a way that they interact with the storehouse of knowledge brought to the act of looking and, therefore, demand, even challenge, the interpretive capabilities of viewers.

The multivalent character of these images leads me to the secondary conversation my dissertation examines: the verbal and analytical discourse that these images would have inspired between viewers in front of images hanging in the domestic interior. In Bruegel's *Peasant Wedding Banquet* (fig. 8), a festive Flemish

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(2005), 105-113; R. Falkenburg, "Recente visies op de zeventiende-eeuwse Nederlandse genre-schilderkunst," *Theoretische Geschiedenis*, vol. 18, no. 2 (1991), 119-141; Wolfgang Stechow and Christopher Comer, "The History of the Term Genre," *Allen Memorial Museum Bulletin*, vol. 30, n. 2 (1973), 88-94; Zirka Zaremba Filipczak, *Picturing Art in Antwerp*, 1550-1700, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987; Hessel Miedema, *Karel van Mander, Den grondt der edel vry schilder-const*, Utrecht: Haentjens Dekker & Gumbert (1973), 2 vol.; L. De Pauw-De Veen, *De begrippen 'schilder', 'schilderij' en 'schilderen' in de zeventiende eeuw*, Brussel: Paleis der Academien, 1969.

[29] Melion, *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon* (1991), 145-6.

[30] In regards to Aertsen, Stoichita concludes that the unconventionality of subject matter and handling in some of his works, such as his presentation of peasants and foodstuffs, gave them the status of "anti-painting." Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image* (1997), 3-18. See also Charlotte Houghton, "This was Tomorrow: Pieter Aertsen's *Meat Stall* as Contemporary Art," *Art Bulletin*, vol. 86, no. 2 (June 2004), 277-300.

banquet is set within a barn filled with hay from the recent harvest. The guests are seated around a long diagonally composed table. They eat and drink while in the foreground more food is distributed and more beer is poured. The bride is denoted by a green drapery attached to the wall of hay and an honorary crown tacked above her head. On the right side, a monk and a bearded man dressed in black are attentively engaged in conversation (fig. 9). The monk's right hand assumes the gesture of speech while the distinguished urbanite, presumably the lord of the territory, thoughtfully listens with his hands folded, signaling his contemplation of the friar's words. The two are obviously outsiders, probably visiting the village to take part in the wedding ceremony as cleric and witness.[31] It has been argued, rather convincingly, that Bruegel's *Peasant Wedding Banquet* probably hung in the dining room of the wealthy Jean Noirot, the Antwerp Mint Master from 1562-1572, a subject I will return to in more detail in the next chapter.[32] If we view Bruegel's painted feast with the understanding that the picture hung in a dining room, where cultivated guests were themselves partaking in a meal, this marginal detail of the monk and urbanite is an important illustration of the most important activity at mealtimes for Bruegel's educated viewers—learned discussion. If the other people seated at the long table—most of whom do not engage one another, focusing their attention on the food and drink before them—illustrate for viewers social manners of peasants, then the two more civilized "outsiders" provide an example of proper behavior for the middle class during a dinner party.[33] Therefore, contemporary ideas about conduct and conversation surrounding the feast become important elements for reconstructing hypothetical scenarios for the reception of art.

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[31] On the social function of these two guests, see Ethan Matt Kavaler, *Pieter Bruegel: Parables of Order and Enterprise*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1999), 163-168.

[32] Luc Smolderen, "Tableaux de Jérôme Bosch, de Pierre Bruegel L'Ancien et de Frans Floris Dispersés en vente publique á la monnaie d'anvers en 1572," *Revue Belge D'Archéologie et d'Histoire de l'Art*, vol. LXIV (1995), 33-41; Claudia Goldstein, "Artifacts of Domestic Life: Bruegel's paintings in the Flemish home," in *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, vol. 47 (1996), 174-193 and "Keeping Up Appearances: The Social Significance of Domestic Decoration in Antwerp, 1508-1600," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 2003.

[33] For example, regarding earlier peasant imagery with more overt displays of drunkenness and bawdiness, Kavaler explains that, "this strain of peasant imagery seems closely associated with an urban approach to self-definition through negative example." Kavaler, *Pieter Bruegel* (1999), 158. See also Margaret Sullivan, *Bruegel's Peasants*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. Sullivan makes a similar argument for the peasant feasts of Pieter Aertsen; see "Aertsen's Kitchen and Market Scenes: Audience and Innovation in the art of Pieter Aertsen," *Art Bulletin*, vol. 81 (1999), 236-266.

I examine the *convivium* tradition as a model for better understanding how contemporary viewers may have analyzed and discussed the multivalent nature of Bruegel's pictures. As a genre of literature, the *convivium* stretches from Antiquity to the Renaissance and describes interactions that took place before, during and after mealtime. For example, dialogues, such as Erasmus's *Convivia*, offer detailed instructions for proper conversation within a convivial setting. However, the interactions described in these texts not only took place in the dining room but also throughout the domestic interior, before and after the meal, as well as outside in the garden. Although Erasmus's dialogues are, for the most part, ideal and fictional, their popularity increased their instructional value and they became social standards to be imitated. The *convivia* of the wealthy and educated, then, helps delimit the context in which period viewers saw and understood paintings such as Bruegel's *Peasant Wedding Banquet*.

This viewing context is predicated on the fact that while one partakes of food or drink that cultivates the body, one should also engage in conversation that cultivates the mind. The conversation that structures this self-cultivation is, as we shall see, analytical in nature. It is a setting that is described as being more receptive to questions than answers and is characterized by varied and open-ended discussions. Diverse topics are proposed which inspire equally diverse comments and opinions. In the end, being right or wrong about a particular subject matter has little value; rather, how well one argues his point and inspires further conversation and opportunity for learning is what is important. I will argue that it is in this analytical and curious atmosphere that Bruegel's multivalent works would have functioned as "conversation pieces" that facilitated self-cultivation.[34] Therefore, I want to emphasize here that all of my observations on and interpretations of Bruegel's work in the following chapters should be understood to operate in this context—a kind of convivial re-enactment in which one voice among several raises questions or ideas about both the meaning and mechanics of the pictures. My aim is to discuss both the visual mechanics of the images as well as the way they would have functioned in the period to raise questions

[34] The term "conversation piece" was first applied to Bruegel's work by Meadow in his discussion of the artist's *Netherlandish Proverbs*. See *Pieter Bruegel the Elder's Netherlandish Proverbs and the Practice of Rhetoric*, Zwolle: Waanders (2002), 153.

and inspire discussion. No doubt that subsequent (art historical) voices will differ in many ways from my own, as my voice differs from my predecessors, but what remains important is whether or not these voices inspire further conversation and the pursuit of understanding.

Conversation culminating in self-cultivation leads me to my final introductory comments. By focusing on the visual evidence provided by the pictures themselves in conjunction with the reconstruction of their hypothetical reception in a convivial context, I will show how Bruegel's practice of mediating pictorial elements and visual concepts from history painting into local scenes of everyday life extends beyond showing artistic influence or a cultivation of his vernacular style. Rather, I will argue that his artistic mediation is not at all separated from the content of the images, and would have awakened a repertoire of references—visual, literary, religious—that the viewer brought to the act of looking. Ernst Gombrich describes this as the "beholder's share," which extends far beyond simply the viewer's knowledge of a story's plot from which the scene of a painting is taken. A viewer's understanding of a representation is dependent on all previous experiences he or she is led to associate with its subject matter. "All representation relies to some extent on what I have called 'guided projections.' When we say that the blots and brushstrokes of the impressionist landscapes 'suddenly come to life,' we mean we have been led to project a landscape into these dabs of pigment."[35] Considering the highly analytical convivial environment I briefly described, the viewer's recognition of these formal and/or stylistic elements could have inspired "guided projections" which led to discussions regarding possible thematic connections between Bruegel's rustic scenes, the visual sources he mediates and the lived experiences of the viewer. In fact, it is precisely in the moment of recognition that a shift of perspective occurs in which the viewer redefines what is represented in the context of what is referenced. In so doing, Bruegel's practice of mediating both form and content functions not only to further validate his artistic practice and subject, but also to cultivate the mind of the viewer—to understand the painting and his or her visual experience not only in the context of what is pictured but

[35] Ernst Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, Princeton: University Press (1960), 203.

also in light of the way in which the image inspires the viewer's imagination.[36] The process of sight and insight, of seeing and understanding, is dependent on the viewer not taking the picture at face value, but analytically engaging and discussing it. This habit of seeing through, or within, what seems to be a depiction of everyday life, pictorial references or marginal motifs that comment on or offer insight for the painting as a whole, is consistent throughout Bruegel's work and has a much longer history in earlier Netherlandish art, a subject I will discuss further in Chapter Three.

In terms of method, it is important to emphasize that it is the pictures themselves and the visual experience they inspire that form the primary source material for my research. Rather than look exclusively towards texts to explicate Bruegel's paintings, I build my arguments from a careful analysis of the visual grammar and syntax of the individual works (how the particulars in an image are organized into groups). To this end, Otto Pächt's discussion of the "design principle (*Gestaltungsprinzip*)" has been highly influential. The design principle is not merely visible form but something more fundamental, a system of differential relations that organizes the work: figure-ground relationships, framing devices and tensions between horizontal and vertical or foreground and background motifs.[37] It is out of a close observation of these elements and the aesthetic experience they produce that questions regarding form and content arise. As Wolfgang Kemp so aptly states: "the function of beholding has already been incorporated into the work itself."[38] That is to say, perception itself is interpretive; simply observing structural design is already a part of the viewer's process of discerning meaning. Also important is to supplement this visual analysis by relating it to the complex web of contemporary images that the pictures would have most likely been viewed in association with. It is important to combine what Kemp defines as "reception aesthetics" with Gombrich's "psychology of reception," i.e. that the work of art dynamically interacts with the beholder and the

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[36] As George Didi-Huberman explains, "The word 'expectative' attempts to account for this paradox, that a visibility can acquire all its value not from what it shows but from the expectation of a visibility it does not show." See Didi-Huberman, *Fra Angelico: Dissemblance and Figuration.* Chicago: University Press (1995), 76.

[37] Otto Pächt, *The Practice of Art History: Reflections on Method*, London: Harvey Miller Publishers (1999), 11.

[38] Wolfgang Kemp, "The Work of Art and Its Beholder: The Methodology of the Aesthetic of Reception," in Mark A. Cheetham, et al (eds.) *The Subjects of Art History: Historical Objects in Contemporary Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1998), 181.

storehouse of mental images he or she brings to the act of looking. These resonances, or pictorial associations that exist in the imagination of the viewer, are as important for reconstructing context and meaning as what is actually shown in the picture itself.[39] Depending on pictures rather than texts as the primary source for interpretation is speculative and less verifiable. However, in the following my analysis will be layered in such a way that while I allow the images themselves to raise the primary questions of inquiry, in order to work towards answering these questions I will contextualize my visual analysis of Bruegel's work within discussions of textual sources, including period treatises on art, poetry, rhetoric and convivia, in order to provide corroborating evidence for my readings.

The first chapter is dedicated to more closely examining the two conversations I have briefly described above, especially in the context of the two parallel literary phenomena—the Pléiade program and *convivium* tradition. In the first section, I question the term vernacular as it has been applied to Bruegel in recent art historical literature, particularly the way it is used to situate the artist within a school of painting that rejects Italianate, classicist influence. In order to expand the concept, I take a closer look at two contemporary texts, one by Lucas de Heere and another by Abraham Ortelius (1527-1598), which have been understood by art historians to illustrate a polemic between a Northern school of painting and an Italianate style. Without rejecting that a polemic is present in these texts, I redefine the issues at stake by analyzing two contemporary artistic discussions that were intricately intertwined and widespread in Bruegel's artistic community: first, the debate around art and nature; second, the program of the Pléiade poets and rhetorician's society for the cultivation of the vernacular language. These two discussions, I will argue, are fundamental for better understanding the art theoretical statements made by De Heere and Ortelius, as

[39] Important studies in this regard are Wolfgang Kemp (ed.), *Der Betrachter ist im Bild. Kunstwissenschaft und Rezeptionsästhetik*, Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1992; Valeska van Rosen, Klaus Krüger, Rudolf Preimesberger (eds.), *Der stumme Diskurs der Bilder. Reflexionsformen des Ästhetischen in der Kunst der frühen Neuzeit*, München: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2003; Jürgen Müller, "Holbein und Laokoon. Ein Beitrag zur gemalten Kunsttheorie Hans Holbeins d.J.," in Bodo Brinkmann und Wolfgang Schmid (eds.) *Hans Holbein und der Wandel in der Kunst des frühen 16. Jahrhunderts*, Turnhout: Brepols (2005), 73-89.

well as for acquiring a model for viewing the inter-pictorial discourse active in Bruegel's later work.

In Chapter Two, my focus will be a deeper look into the viewing context of paintings that hung in the domestic interior using the genre of literature of the *convivium* tradition. I discuss various convivial texts, focusing primarily on Erasmus's six *convivia* first published in 1518, and argue that Bruegel's paintings can be better understood as "conversation pieces" within an atmosphere that prizes an analytical mind and diverse opinions.

Chapter Three is dedicated to a close visual analysis of three of Bruegel's later paintings of peasants—*Peasant Wedding Banquet*, *Peasant Dance* and *Peasant and Nest Robber*. My discussion of each painting is divided into two categories. On the one hand, I formally analyze the visual mechanics of the pictures. My focus will be especially on their hybrid, multivalent character, in which conscious quotes of well-known visual concepts or pictorial elements from history painting are subtly mediated within detailed representations of local custom. This mediation, I will continue to argue, should be understood in the context of vernacular cultivation, or enrichment, which is comparable to the humanist program for the cultivation of the vernacular language. In addition, I will show how these visual translations, if you will, are not at all separated from the content of the images and are important for describing the visual experience these pictures would have facilitated. For the *Peasant Wedding Banquet*, the fundamental question at stake is, what is the nature of a feast? The individual figures and diagonal composition lead viewers to a discussion about social manners—a balance between pleasure and refinement—as well as to seeing both the painting and the lived feast of the viewer in front of it in relation to one of the most important feasts of the Bible, the wedding at Cana. For the *Peasant Dance*, the fundamental question posed is, what is the nature of a kermis? By combining visual concepts from Italianate bacchanalia with more traditional iconography of peasant kermises and constructing compositional elements that demand specific ways of seeing particular motifs and actions in relation to one another, Bruegel thematizes the viewer's act of 'seeing through' and visual discernment. The artist stages a viewing experience that negotiates the fragile balance between celebratory, carefree behavior and cultivated reverence when observing church holidays, a balance that, according to church officials and

political leaders, had vanished from village kermises. For the *Peasant and Nest Robber*, I will build on the work of previous scholars to propose that, on the one hand, Bruegel's picture is a detailed, complex representation of farmers in their rustic surroundings which would have been viewed in relation not only to a Dutch proverb and a motif from Sebastian Brant's *Ship of Fools* but also to a description of folly by Erasmus in *The Praise of Folly*. On the other hand, Bruegel also incorporates into his peasant scene specific pictorial elements that the viewer would have associated with depictions of John the Baptist, a recognition that would have led to conversation and insights about possible thematic connections between the life of the biblical figure and the actions of the central peasant.

The *Festival of Fools*, a print by Pieter van der Heyden after Bruegel's design, is the subject of the fourth and final chapter. Although the medium is a print rather than panel painting, and therefore the audience much more broad and diverse, I will show that the practices of making and viewing works of art I describe in the previous chapters are also helpful in thinking about this particular design. Building on the key elements of blindness and self-knowledge developed in my discussion of the *Peasant and Nest Robber*, I will interweave analyses of certain aspects of the picture—architecture, actions of the fools, and text—in order to show how Bruegel elaborates on the processional format of contemporary *facties* (wagon plays presented at drama festivals), using architecture, figures and accompanying text to visually and intellectually fuse the world of the viewer and that of the picture. Specifically, I will explain how the bowling game represented incites the performance of interpretation as an exercise in overcoming blindness through the acquisition of self-knowledge. Subsequently, I will discuss how Bruegel's allegory of folly not only resonates visually with *facties* but also depictions of allegorical processions. I will argue that although Bruegel's picture would have been viewed in the context of these vernacular plays, there are other pictorial elements that reveal a visual discourse with the practice of representing allegorical processions, particularly those of Maarten van Heemskerck. More precisely, the manner in which Bruegel portrays the procession of fools not only incorporates visual illustrations of local proverbs, gestures or customs specific to the subject, but also mediates classical architecture and pictorial motifs that resemble, or play on, a type of image that, although not classical in nature, had been employed up to

this point for classical themes or royal entries. As a result, Bruegel presents a local festivity in a form that brings with it a certain mode, or habit, of viewing that would have informed the viewer's analysis and interpretation.

I conclude the dissertation with a close reading of an anecdote about Bruegel written by Karl van Mander in his description of the life of Hans Vredeman de Vries (1527-1607). This account of a coincidental artistic interaction between Bruegel and Vredeman has been largely neglected by art historians and offers a glimpse into a possible visual discourse between two well-known artists and how the confrontation of their different artistic styles was evaluated in the latter portion of the sixteenth century.

Chapter One

Vernacular Discourse and the Art / Nature Debate

I much prefer that my style be my own, rude and undefined, perhaps, but made to the measure of my mind, like a well-cut gown rather than to use someone else's style, more elegant, ambitious, and ornamented, but suited to a greater genius than mine…An actor can wear any kind of garment; but a writer cannot adopt any kind of style. He should form his own and keep it, for fear we should laugh at him…Certainly each of us has naturally something individual and his own in his utterance and language as in his face and gesture. It is better and more rewarding for us *to develop and train this quality than to change it*. (emphasis added) [40]

Petrarch
Letter to Boccaccio

As an introduction to the primary subjects of the first section of this chapter, I would like to first briefly discuss a few aspects of the three pictures that are addressed more fully in Chapter Three, as well as some of the issues and questions they raise. Scholars such as Charles de Tolnay and Walter Gibson, among others, have noted that in the last two years of his life, Bruegel departed noticeably from the early sixteenth-century practice of depicting peasant festivities, when he took miniature peasants from the printed and written page and transformed them into monumental figures in oil on panel.[41] For example, the ordered composition of the *Peasant Wedding Banquet*, particularly noticeable in the three bulky servers in the foreground that lead the viewer's gaze toward the bride, departs noticeably from previous representations of more chaotic peasant feasts, as portrayed by, for example, Pieter van der Borcht (1545-1608) and Hans Sebald Beham (fig. 10, 11).[42] As has been observed, the overt illustrations of negative behavior—such as vomiting, fighting and sexual embraces—that are prominent in these two festive depictions are in Bruegel's painting completely

[40] *Letters from Petrarch*, trans. Morris Bishop, Bloomington and London, 1966. As quoted in Thomas M. Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry*, New Haven: Yale University Press (1982), 97.
[41] Almost every Bruegel scholar has made this observation; a few examples include Charles de Tolnay, *Pierre Bruegel l'ancien*, Brussels: Nouvelle Societe d'Editions, 1935; Carl Gustaf Stridbeck, *Bruegelstudien* (1977); Walter Gibson, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Two Studies*. Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas (1991), 37-41; Margaret Sullivan, *Bruegel's Peasants* (1994).
[42] Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (inv. GG 1027), 114 x 164 cm. Roberts-Jones writes that when compared to earlier depictions of peasant weddings, Bruegel's *Wedding Feast* is striking above all because of its authenticity and form, whose "classicism" has been rightly emphasized. Philippe and Françoise Roberts-Jones, *Pieter Bruegel*, New York: Harry N. Abrams (2002), 270.

removed.[43] Especially intriguing is the diagonal perspective of the table, which is often mentioned by art historians as a compositional arrangement traditionally found in depictions of the biblical story of the wedding at Cana.[44] In an engraving of the Cana wedding designed by Gerard van Groningen (1515-1574), also active in Antwerp during the second half of the sixteenth century, guests are situated around a similar diagonally composed table (fig. 12). Two particularly comparable figures in these two pictures are the contemplative brides who are seated in the middle of the table with their hands folded in front of them and the servants on the opposite side of the picture who are busy pouring wine or beer (fig. 13-16). Others have pointed out several aspects of the painting as being Italianate, particularly that the three bulky servers I mentioned, who surround the makeshift serving tray, resonate with the figures of Michelangelo.[45] In addition, their complex assembly of arms and overlapping legs that help to visually communicate the narrative of the picture is a figural grouping more at home in a painting by Raphael than in a Flemish peasant scene. The formal

[43] Having said this, the positive or negative character of these images is not an issue that I will address. On the history of this long debate, see the exchange between Svetlana Alpers and Hessel Miedema; Alpers, "Bruegel's Festive Peasants," *Simiolus*, vol. 6, no. 3-4 (1972-3), 166-175 and "Realism as a comic mode: low-life painting seen through Bredero's eyes," *Simiolus* vol. 8, no.3 (1975-6), 115-144; for Miedema's rebuttal see, "Realism and comic mode: the peasant," *Simiolus*, vol. 9, no.4 (1977), 205-219; Alpers defense is given in her article, "Taking pictures seriously: a reply to Hessel Miedema," *Simiolus*, vol. 10 (1978-9), 46-50. For a summary and insightful commentary on this debate, see Gibson, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Two Studies* (1991) and his most recent article "Festive Peasants Before Bruegel: Three Case Studies and Their Implications," *Simiolus*, vol. 31, no. 4 (2004/05), 292-309. See also Hessel Miedema, "Feestende boeren—Lachende dorpers. Bij twee recente aanwinsten van het Rijksprentenkabinet," *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum*, vol. 29 (1981), 191-213; Margaret D. Carroll, "Peasant Festivity and Political Identity in the Sixteenth-Century," *Art History*, vol. 10 (1987), 287-314; Konrad Renger, "Flemish Genre Painting: Low Life-High Life-Daily Life," in Peter Sutton (ed.), *The Age of Rubens,* Ghent: Ludion Press, 1993; Bart Ramakers, "Kinderen van Saturnus: Afstand en nabijheid van boeren in de beeldende kunst en het toneel van de zestiende eeuw," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, *Het exotische verbeeld 1550-1950*, vol. 53, Zwolle: Waanders Publishers (2002), 13-51; and De Costa Kaufmann, *The Eloquent Artist* (2004), 106-118.

[44] Since 1907, scholars have pointed to similarities between the diagonal composition of the *Peasant Wedding Banquet* and similar scenes of the wedding at Cana. See the following studies on Bruegel: René van Bastelaer and Georges Hulin de Loo, *Pieter Bruegel l'Ancien, son oeuvre et son temps: Etude historique, suivre des catalogues raisonnés de son oeuvre*, Brussels: Van Oest, 1907; Max Dvořák, *Pierre Bruegel l'ancien,* Brionne: Monfort, 1992 (original 1921); J. Weyns, "Twee bruiloften uit de oude tijd," *Noordgouw*, vo. 16, no. 4 (1976), 177-198; Walter Gibson, *Pieter Bruegel*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1977; H.J. Raupp, *Bauernsatiren* (1986), 283-4; Margaret Sullivan, *Bruegel's Peasants* (1994); Matt Kavaler, *Pieter Bruegel: Parables of Order and Enterprise* (1999).

[45] See, for example, Walter Gibson, *Bruegel* (1991). See also Peter Sutton, "Masters of Dutch Genre Painting," in *Masters of Seventeenth-Century Dutch Genre Painting*, exhibition catalogue, Philadelphia Museum of Art (1984), xxvii where he refers to Bruegel's later representations of peasants as "heroically monumental." On Bruegel's "romanism" in general, see Stridbeck, *Bruegelstudien* (1977); Max Dvořák, *The History of Art as the History of Ideas*, London: Routledge (1984), 70-96.

construction that leads the viewer into depth toward the protagonist of the scene contrasts significantly with the previous chaotic compositions of peasant festivities that structured what was considered to be its equally chaotic subject matter.

On the one hand, Bruegel's representation is a detailed depiction of a local custom with all the necessary figures and objects present to make it look like an "actual" event taking place in a Brabant country village. On the other hand, what makes this painting different from previous practices of depicting peasants is not the subject matter it pictures, rather *how* the subject is portrayed. For a representation of peasants, Bruegel incorporates a composition and monumental figural constructions traditionally associated with what was considered to be the most ambitious type of painting: *historia.*[46] Despite the fact that scholars over the last century have noted elements of Bruegel's lofty presentation of peasants, connecting the composition with an arrangement used for a biblical story and the bulky servers in the foreground with Michelangoesque forms, if one were to take a survey of the vocabulary used in scholarly literature to describe these paintings, the list of words might look something like this: naturalistic, moralistic, satirical, comic, rustic, northern, vernacular.[47] For the most part, emphasis continues to primarily be placed on the previous iconographic tradition of peasant festivities inherited by Bruegel and on the question of whether or not his rustic scenes reveal a particular ideological perspective: social, economic or religious.[48] Although these scholarly endeavors offer valuable insights, what remains

[46] For a discussion of painted *historia*, see p. 13.
[47] For overviews of the most recent literature, see n. 43; for overviews of early interpretations of Bruegel, see Michel Edouard, "Bruegel et la Critique Moderne," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, vol. 19, 6th periode, 27-46; Wilhelm Fraenger, *Der Bauern-Bruegel und das Deutsche Sprichwort*, Erlenbach-Zürich: E. Rentsch, 1923; Hans-Wolfgang von Löhneysen, *Die ältere niederländische Malerei, Künstler und Kritiker*, Eisenach: Röth Verlag, 1956; E. Duverger, "Pieter Bruegel, 1569-1969," *Spiegel Historiael*, vol. 4 (1969), 659-665; R.H. Marijnissen, "Het wetenschappelijk onderzoek van Bruegels oeuvre," *Vlaanderen*, vol. 18 (1969), 4-11; F. Grossman, *Pieter Bruegel: Complete Edition of the Paintings*, London: Phaidon, 1973; J. Muylle, "Pier den Drol—Karel van Mander en Pieter Bruegel. Bijdrage tot de literaire receptie van Pieter Bruegels werk ca. 1600," in *Wort und Bild in der niederländischen Kunst und Literatur des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts*, Erftstadt: Lukassen Verlag (1984), 137-144.
[48] Paul Vandenbroeck, "Verbeeck's peasant weddings: a study of iconography and social function," *Simiolus*, vol. 14, 80-121; Gibson, *Pieter Bruegel* (1991); M. Carroll, "Peasant Festivity and Political Identity" (1987); Kavaler, *Parables of Order and Enterprise* (1999); Anabella Weismann, "Was hört und sieht der Dudelsackpfeifer auf der Bauernhochzeit? Bemerkungen über ein allzu bekanntes Gemälde von Pieter Bruegel," in Dietmar Kamper and Christoph Wulf (eds.), *Schweigen: Unterbrechung und Grenze der menschlichen Wirklichkeit*, Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1992; A. De Blaere, S.J. "Bruegel and the Religious Problems of His Time," *Apollo*, vol. 105, 1977.

to be addressed are the questions surrounding the function, beyond showing artistic influence, of employing such "artful" means, i.e. characteristics that resonate with history painting, for representing a subject like the peasant. Equally important is how Bruegel's contemporary viewers would have discussed the tension created between form and content and whether or not the recognition of a compositional reference would have led to a discussion about possible thematic connections between referee, referent and the viewer.

Bruegel's similarly monumental *Peasant Dance* (fig. 17), also painted in 1568 and now in Vienna, is a representation of a village church festival in full swing.[49] The village is filled with peasants, many of whom are prominently displayed across the picture plane participating in the celebratory revelries: dancing, drinking, making music and kissing. The emphasis on the intertwined, monumental figures in motion, whose arms and legs are constructed so as to frame spaces that lead the viewer's gaze into depth, has led some art historians, such as Klaus Demus, to describe the picture as possessing a full classical unity, attaining "a classicism, perceived as the highest level of artistically developed form."[50] Other scholars, such as Margaret Sullivan, have likened the picture to an Italian style of representing bacchanals—and, therefore, to correlate peasant festivity with bacchic revelry—such as the crowd of mythological figures displayed across the foreground in Titian's *The Andrians* (fig. 18).[51]

In Titian's painting, a naked man on the left leans toward the center; his left arm is lowered to stabilize a plate and his right arm is extended in the air in order to pour the last bit of wine from a pitcher. This figure is coupled with another man opposite him, who also leans forward with his left arm extended. The figures and their actions function to frame a recessional space and guide the viewer's gaze into depth toward a detail of a man kneeling while making wine. The formal arrangement of the monumental figures leads the viewer's gaze through the painting, visually connecting foreground and background, and clearly constructing the narrative of the picture. However, such formal constructions of monumental figures were also common among Bruegel's Northern contemporaries who represented Italian style bacchanalia—such as

[49] Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (inv. GG1059), 114 x 164 cm
[50] Arnout Balis, et al. (eds.), *La Peinture Flamande au Kunsthistorisches Museum de Vienne*, Antwerp: Fonds Mercator (1987), 96.
[51] Sullivan, *Bruegel's Peasants* (1994), 118-132.

Maarten van Heemskerck's *Triumph of Bacchus* (1536, fig. 19) and Frans Floris's *Feast of the Gods* (ca. 1555-60, fig. 20)—pictures that were much more readily accessible to Bruegel. And Bruegel's composition of peasants dancing is no less ambitious. For example, the complex assembly of the large dancing figures on the right of the *Peasant Dance* leads the beholder into depth through a constellation of arms and legs; the couple's raised clasped hands in the middle ground form an arch that both frames the recessional space as well as echoes and points toward the arches of the church in the background. To the left of the central peasant dressed in black in the foreground, a second similar recessional corridor constructed by bodies invites the viewer into the fictive space of the painting toward a fool with his left hand raised, standing next to a visitor from the city. The formal use of bodies to visually emphasize and juxtapose the church and fool in the background not only constructs the visual experience of the painting, but it is this visual experience itself, in addition to any iconographic details that are represented, that informs the process of discerning meaning.

Furthermore, Margaret Sullivan has connected the architectural background of the *Peasant Dance* with Serlio's stage setting for satyric scenes (fig. 21), which became a popular reference for artists after it was published by the widow of Pieter Coecke van Aelst, to whom Bruegel may have been apprenticed.[52] This particular woodcut was one of three designs which corresponded to the three modes of classical drama: tragedy, comedy and satire. In 1553, Marie Verhulst published a complete edition, including both text and images, of Serlio's treatise on architecture, a project that her husband had taken up years before his death.[53] The standards of Vitruvius soon became criteria in formal contracts.[54] Unlike the panoramic view of Bruegel's earlier representations of peasant kermises, such as the *St. George Kermis* (fig. 22), his painting of the *Peasant Dance* is similar to Serlio's model in that the ground plane is level with that of the viewer and a single dirt path leads into the distance. Two rows of receding country homes line the road.

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[52] Sullivan, *Bruegel's Peasants* (1994), 19. Sullivan uses the connection to argue that, for Bruegel's humanist viewers, his painted peasants would have been understood as parallels to drunken satyrs and their debased morality.
[53] Herman de la Fontaine Verwey, "Pieter Coecke van Aelst en de uitgaven van Serlio's Architectuurboek," *Het Boek*, n.s. 31 (1952-4), 251-270.
[54] Kavaler, *Parables of Order and Enterprise* (1999), 48.

While we can not be certain that Serlio's design directly influenced Bruegel's later composition of peasants, we are, nevertheless, again faced with a monumental painting in oil on panel in which a detailed representation of local custom is combined with a mode of painting that resonates with visual concepts of a *historia*. Whereas the majority of previous depictions of village kermises, both in print or painting, offered a panoramic view of various local activities surrounding the celebration of a religious holiday, in the *Peasant Dance* the horizon line is shifted so that the viewer confronts the festivities from a completely different perspective—both ontologically and artistically. The peasant figures are not only "on equal ground" with their viewers but also the composition more strongly emphasizes the way the individual figures, as well as their grouping, are constructed to guide the gaze and communicate the narrative, framing space for depth perception while facilitating specific relationships between foreground and background motifs. In addition, the lingering question remains that if the viewer would have correlated Bruegel's visual presentation of a peasant kermis with a similar way of depicting classical bacchanalia, what bearing does this thematic connection have on our understanding of viewer reception, regarding both form and content? How were paintings of bacchanalia, a new subject in the North during the sixteenth century, received?

Bruegel painted a third peasant scene in 1568, the *Peasant and Nest Robber* (fig. 23).[55] A golden rustic landscape on the right and a cluster of trees on the left serve as the backdrop for the central figure in the picture who strides directly toward the viewer; his next step will send him plunging into the barely visible river in the foreground. The hazard is not only difficult to see for the viewer, it is also ignored by the peasant; he is preoccupied with pointing out a second figure who is high in the tree, busy plundering a bird's nest. As with the *Peasant Wedding Banquet* and *Peasant Dance*, comparisons have been suggested between this representation of a farmer on his land and an Italianate mode of expression. For example, scholars have connected the pose and stocky body of the central figure to a number of possible Italian sources, including a putto beneath an Erythraean Sibyl on the ceiling of Michelangelo's Sistine

[55] Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (inv. GG 1020), 59.3 x 68.3 cm

Chapel (fig. 24).[56] However, particularly striking is the peasant's gesture with his left hand, pointing upward across his chest, which has been associated with a painting of *John the Baptist* by Leonardo, now in the Louvre (fig. 25).[57] Upon closer observation, the two figures by Bruegel and Leonardo also share remarkably similar facial structures and expressions; they both have widely separated eyes, elongated noses and faint smiles. The peasant's gesture, coupled with the fact that he is walking in the countryside, is also identical to depictions of John the Baptist in the wilderness as represented by Marcantonio Raimondi (1475-1534) (fig. 26); the figure is in mid-stride between two trees and points across his chest in the direction of the cross at the end of his staff. In terms of its overall composition, including the facial expression and gesture of the central figure, Bruegel's *Peasant and Nest Robber* also resonates with a painting titled *Baptist/Bacchus*, dated ca. 1513-1516 and now in the Louvre (fig. 27), which was probably a collaboration between Leonardo and a pupil.[58] However, this particular presentation of John the Baptist in the wilderness, accompanied by a river and plants in the foreground and animals in the background, can also be found in earlier paintings of the subject, such as Pintoricchio's (1454-1513) representation in the Cathedral Chapel of John the Baptist, Sienna (1504, fig. 28).

As with the *Peasant Wedding Banquet*, whose composition resembles one employed for depictions of the wedding at Cana, in the *Peasant and Nest Robber* it is also possible that pictorial elements traditionally employed for a religious subject, a man who lived his life in the wilderness, are translated into a painting that, if taken at face value, seems to depict a farmer in the countryside. In addition, comparable to my comments in the Introduction about the Leonardesque face in Aertsen's *Pancake*

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[56] See Stridbeck, *Bruegelstudien* (1977), 276; Jürgen Müller, *Das Paradox als Bildform*, München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag (1999), 82-89. For a general study of this painting, see Thomas Noll, "Pieter Bruegel d.Ä.: der Bauer, der Vogeldieb und die Imker," *Münchner Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst*, vol. 50 (1999), 65-106.

[57] Ibid. See also Charles de Tolnay, "Bruegel et l'Italie," in *Les Arts Plastiques* (1951), 121-130; Pierre Vinken and Lucy Schlüter, "Pieter Bruegels *Nestrover* en de mens die de dood tegemoet treedt," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, vol. 46, Zwolle: Waanders (1996), 54-79.

[58] It seems that a student of Leonardo first painted the picture as a depiction of John the Baptist, following an earlier drawing by the master (fig. 76), but later, possibly later in the seventeenth century, the cross on the staff was painted out and the attributes of Bacchus—a crown of vine leaves, thyrsus and cluster of grapes—were added by a different artist. For a more detailed study on this painting, see C. Pedretti, *Leonardo. A Study in Chronology and Style*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press (1973) 163-167. The painting was still a St. John when it was seen by Cassiano dal Pozzo in 1625. See also, Raymond S. Stites, *The Sublimations of Leonardo da Vinci*, Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press (1970), 353-360.

Eaters, it seems that Bruegel also mediates a similar Italianate style into his vernacular scene of a peasant. The tension generated between form and content, sacred and profane in Bruegel's paintings creates an ambivalence that, I will argue throughout this study, begs for more in-depth analysis from the viewer on both artistic and religious grounds. Bruegel's inter-pictorial discourse not only mediates religious subjects within everyday life, mixing the sacred with the profane, but also combines an Italianate artistic style with his own practice of depicting local custom. As a result, the viewers of this visual conversation have to follow the interplay of that mediation, shifting focus back and forth from the surface of the painting to the models mediated, from formal analysis to the revelations these observations inspire regarding possible thematic connections. Such visual and intellectual agility requires time and patience, a slow extrication of meaning through prolonged meditation on and experience of the painting.

This brief description of three peasant paintings made by Bruegel in the same year, as well as some of the visual concepts and pictorial elements they mediate, reiterates two issues I raised in the Introduction that the remainder of this chapter will address in greater detail. One issue regards the very different subject matter depicted in Bruegel's pictures—the everyday life of the peasant—in comparison to the original context of the formal and/or stylistic references that are incorporated, which are from representations of biblical or classical themes. This translation of form and content from one context into another—transgressing categories such as antique and modern, Italian and Northern or sacred and profane—leads to the second issue I have briefly discussed: the inherent contradiction between these observations and the assertion by modern art historians that Bruegel is an artist who was committed to the "natural life of Brabant" and "eschewed classicist, Italianate influences."[59]

[59] Freedberg, "Allusion and Topicality" (1989), 63. See also Meadow, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder's Netherlandish Proverbs* (2002).

II.

As I briefly mentioned, by the mid-sixteenth century increased travel and circulation of reproductive prints made possible an influx of new Italian art into the Netherlands, creating tension between a more ornate, classicizing style of painting and a practice that rejected such models and looked instead to "local traditions" for its inspiration.[60] Reactions to Italian style from Northern artists varied: some artists like Frans Floris wholeheartedly incorporated the new style while others such as Pieter Aertsen attempted to hybridize the two traditions.[61] Until now, scholars have consistently placed Bruegel in a third category of artists who consciously rejected Italian art altogether and embraced local culture.

The local culture that forms the antithesis to Italian art in this polemic is termed by David Freedberg and Mark Meadow as the "vernacular."[62] For Freedberg, the term indicates that Bruegel depicted an "unadorned truth to nature," refusing to idealize his subjects as Italianists were known to do.[63] In this case, vernacular has to do with a style that is resolute in following nature, having little to do with subject matter, since Freedberg recognizes that in Bruegel's work we see "an unparalled combination of humanist [classical] and popular [local] themes."[64] Freedberg supports the assertion that Bruegel emphasized following nature rather than art by his analysis of a statement made by Abraham Ortelius in a eulogy to Bruegel in his *Album Amicorum*, dating from ca. 1574.[65] In the second to last sentence of the encomium, Ortelius pays tribute to the

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[60] Freedberg, "Allusion and Topicality" (1989), 53-65.
[61] Meadow, "Bruegel's *Procession to Calvary*" (1996), 182. See Carl van de Velde for a study on the painting of Floris, *Frans Floris: Leven en Werken*, 2 vol., Brussel: Paleis der Academiën, 1975.
[62] Meadow and Freedberg, see n. 10. See also Melion, *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon* (1991).
[63] Freedberg, "Allusion and Topicality" (1989), 63.
[64] Ibid. See, for example, Bruegel's *Fall of Icarus* and his two depictions of the *Tower of Babel*.
[65] Ortelius's *Album Amicorum* was compiled between 1573-1596 and contains 134 entries, consisting both of inscriptions from Ortelius' friends and colleagues, and of others written and dedicated by him to them. On the connection between Bruegel and Ortelius, see A.E. Popham, "Pieter Bruegel and Abraham Ortelius," *Burlington Magazine* 59 (1931), 184-188. For further discussion on the relationship between Bruegel and Humanist connections, see C. De Tolnay, *Pierre Bruegel l'Ancien*, Brussels: Nouvelle Société d'Éditions, 1935; Z. Urbach, "Notes on Bruegel's Archaism: His Relation to Early Netherlandish Painting and Other Sources," *Acta Historiae Artium*, XXIV (1978), 237-356; J. Muylle, "Pieter Bruegel en Abraham Ortelius. Bijdrage tot de literaire receptie van Pieter Bruegel's werk," in *Archivum Artis Lovaniense: Bijdragen tot de geschiedenis van de kunst der Nederlanden opgedragen aan Prof. Em. Dr. J.K. Steppe,* Leuven: Peeters (1981), 319-377; Iain Buchanan, "Dürer and Abraham Ortelius," *The Burlington Magazine,* vol. 124 (1982), 734-741.

artist by referring to Eunapius in his negative commentary on Iamblichus where he says that "Painters who are painting handsome youths in their bloom and wish to add to the painting some ornament and charm of their own thereby destroy the whole character of the likeness, so that they fail to achieve the resemblance at which they aim, as well as true beauty." Ortelius continues: "Of such a blemish our friend Bruegel was perfectly free."[66] Freedberg asserts that it is to the "natural life of Brabant" Bruegel commits to highlighting in his work, not idealized forms; as a result, "in his art the vernacular is given the same status as the classical."[67] In other words, whereas classicizing painters prioritized idealized forms, Bruegel represented forms as they were presented to him, i.e. naturally.

Regarding Ortelius's reference to the commentary of Eunapius, Jane Ten Brink Goldsmith claims that "Surely he [Ortelius] is referring here to Bruegel's Romanist contemporaries. The artist [Bruegel] is understood as being more attentive to nature than art." She goes onto to conclude: "His peasants are primarily in his art an extension of the landscape, that is, a human metaphor for nature."[68] Freedberg also argues that Ortelius's statement is indicative of a polemic between the art of Italy and a Northern vernacular school, especially if compared to a similar artistic criticism that is directed at Frans Floris, who is said by modern art historians to paint in a more idealizing, Italianate style.[69] In 1565, Lucas de Heere published *Den hof en boomgaerd der Poësien*, in which he writes an "Invective against a certain painter who scoffed at the painters of Antwerp" in order to defend his teacher, Floris.[70] De Heere has the anonymous artist he addresses condescendingly refer to Floris's paintings as "sugar images" [*suuckerbeeldekens*] because they are "ornamented (*verciert*), becomingly (*betamelijck*) and richly (*rijcke*)."[71] The reference implies something

[66] "Eunapius in Iamblicho. Pictores qui formosulos in aetatis flore constitutos pingunt voluntque picturae lenocinium quoddam et gratium de suo adjicere, totam depravant repraesentatam effigiem, sic ut et ab exemplari proposito pariter et a vera forma aberrant. Ab hac labe purus noster Brugelius." As translated in Meadow, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder's Netherlandish Proverbs* (2002), 109-110. A. Ortelius, *Album Amicorum*, Antwerp, 1573-1596, 12v-13r.
[67] Freedberg, "Allusion and Topicality" (1989), 63.
[68] J. Ten Brink Goldsmith, "Pieter Bruegel and the Matter of Italy," *Sixteenth Century Studies*, vol. 23 (1992), 231. Melion makes a similar assertion, *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon* (1991).
[69] Freedberg, "Allusion and Topicality" (1989), 62-63.
[70] Lucas de Heere, *Den hof en boomgaerd der Poësien*, W. Waterschoot (ed.), Zwolle: W.E.J. Tjeenk Willink, 1969. For an additional analysis of this poem, see van de Velde, vol. 1 (1975), 1-6.
[71] As translated in Meadow, "Bruegel's *Procession to Calvary*" (1996), 181.

superficial, attractive on the outside yet bearing no substance. De Heere counters by explaining that Floris, indeed, paints this way, but "not all over, but where it belongs and is beseeming." Besides, De Heere proclaims, "you are yourself entirely unmannered, / Since you ornament your paintings like kermis dolls." He goes onto to say that for him to paint slow and carefully, like Floris presumably, "Is far too artful for you." Following this reference to artfulness, he continues, "Although you have been to Rome, it is a pitiful thing / That occurred, [just as] the hound goes through the wicker. That you have been to Rome, one cannot see / In your paintings, full of wretched, bad strokes, / That truly look neither Romish (*Roomachtig*), nor antique (*antijcx*)."[72] Not only is Floris criticized for being "ornamented, becomingly and richly," adverbs indicative of standards of art rather than nature, Freedberg claims that De Heere's allusion to the lack of grace in the anonymous painter's work is rather like Ortelius's similar remark about Bruegel—that he does not add ornament or charm. In fact, scholars are often tempted to read De Heere's "certain painter" as being Bruegel. They do so because Bruegel had 'been to Rome,' and yet he returned to Antwerp to specialize in landscapes and peasant subjects, subjects associated specifically with the Northern tradition. The reference to kermis dolls (*kaermes poppen*) brings to mind Bruegel's figures and their faces as represented in images such as the *Battle Between Carnival and Lent* and *Children's Games*. Regardless, of whether or not Bruegel is actually the anonymous artist, in his discussion of this passage Freedberg leads the reader to believe that the painter of "kermis dolls," who is "unmannered," represents the third category of artists mentioned above—those committed to "local culture," and in whose company Bruegel belongs—while the "artful" Floris is representative of the first, Italianate, category.

Despite his emphasis on vernacular style, for Meadow the term "vernacular" is equally applicable to Bruegel's subject matter. Addressing the artist's *Procession to Calvary* (fig. 29), painted in 1565 and now in Vienna, Meadow observes that the Marian group in the lower right foreground is segregated from the rest of the painting spatially.[73] On the one hand, they are set apart in narrative terms, forming an island of

[72] Ibid. It is interesting to note here that, unlike modern art historians, De Heere does not equate the "romish" (i.e. Italian Renaissance) style with the antique.
[73] Meadow, "Bruegel's *Procession to Calvary*" (1996), 189.

grief, turned in upon themselves, neither directly participating in Christ's torment nor regarding it. On the other hand, stylistically the group differs from the rest of the scene, evocating in both figure type and costume the style of fifteenth-century Netherlandish paintings.[74] Unlike the figures surrounding them, these figures are tall and slim, with elongated limbs, reminiscent of a type associated with Rogier van der Weyden (1399-1465). The juxtaposition of an anachronistic citation within a composition clearly belonging within a distinct sixteenth-century landscape tradition would have been striking to its original viewers. Citing Bruegel's previous work, which primarily references Netherlandish artists and traditions, and the growing tension between Italian and Netherlandish styles of painting, between what Meadow describes as "Latinate and vernacular modes," within the context of the humanist "archeological agenda" for recovering the classical past, he argues that Bruegel's reference to early Netherlandish painting can be understood within a similar agenda:

> Whereas for Italy the archeological disinterment of the classical past was simultaneously a reengagement with and an alienation from a culture from which it directly descended, this was not so for the Netherlands. There were no, or at any rate very few, traces of the ancient Roman Empire and its culture to be found in its soil. Encouraged by the methods and tools of humanist education to take an interest in archeological examination of the past, it was inevitable that scholars, linguists and even artists and art critics would turn to their own tradition, their own past, for models to follow […] Bruegel consistently turned to prior Netherlandish art as sources for his own production, taking an interest in categories of art which even at the time were recognized as peculiarly Northern: landscape, peasant scenes and Boschian drolleries.[75]

According to Meadow, Bruegel's "enterprise of vernacular painting" constitutes, therefore, a distinctly Netherlandish mode which has to do with both subject and style.[76]

At this point, according to Freedberg, the term vernacular as applied to the visual arts indicates, in formal terms, art that adamantly follows nature. An artist who paints in the vernacular is one who rejects "innovation of his own" or embellishment

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[74] Svetlana Alpers makes a similar observation in, "Style is what you make it: the visual arts once again," in *The Concept of Style*, ed. by Berel Lang, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press (1979), 95-117.
[75] Meadow, "Bruegel's *Procession to Calvary*" (1996), 199-200.
[76] Ibid., 194-195. See also Silver, *Peasant Scenes and Landscapes* (2006), 1-15; especially his discussion of what he terms the "brand name" effect of artistic identity around a pictorial type.

(art that seeks to improve upon nature). At the same time, according to Meadow, certain pictorial subjects seem to be associated with the vernacular as well, such as peasant scenes and landscapes; subjects that either did not exist or were not as pictorially prominent in other regions. It is a visual tradition that can take on a combination of many different forms (Rogier's slender figures vs. Bruegel's stocky peasant) and/or subject matter, yet is identified with one specific region.[77] But, how are we to evaluate the examples from Bruegel's later work, such as the ones I described at the beginning of this chapter, pictures in which the artist showcases art as much as nature by employing visual concepts and pictorial elements associated with history painting to shape his vernacular scenes of peasants, artful forms and ambitious compositions to construct images of country life?[78] Furthermore, what questions do these formal observations raise about the polemic, supposedly between Northern and Italian art, that is present in the texts of Ortelius and De Heere, as well as about the term vernacular as it has been defined thus far?

In the following, I argue against the assertion that the texts by De Heere and Ortelius represent a polemic between Italian art and a Northern, vernacular tradition, however one defines it. I also argue, rather predictably, against the assumption that Bruegel's later work belongs to a Northern school that rejected classicist, Italianate influences. To do so, I expand the concept of vernacular as it has been applied to visual art by modern scholars through an examination of two contemporary artistic discussions which were intricately related and widespread in Bruegel's artistic

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[77] On the possible political, or nationalistic, motivations for a Northern vernacular style, see M. Carroll, "Peasant Festivity and Political Identity" (1987).

[78] On the few occasions that the observations regarding Bruegel's 'artful' depiction of 'natural life' are taken up by art historians, they are seen as indications that Bruegel's view of the peasant was more positive than some earlier scholarship would have us believe. See for example, S. Alpers, "Taking pictures seriously" (1978-9), 46-50. Since the artful manner in which Bruegel portrays peasants in his later paintings differs drastically from the largely charicatural depiction of peasants found in earlier prints and texts, the conclusion would be, therefore, that Bruegel's pictures were not negatively commenting on rustic life, but were viewed as either empathetic indications of social change or harmless comedy. Jürgen Müller takes a different direction and argues that the mediation of "artful" forms into peasant scenes should be understood in the Erasmian ironic sense, the most well-known example being his *Praise of Folly*. For example, in the *Peasant and Nest Robber*, the mixture of a lowly peasant subject within an Italian artistic manner reverses the visual trend depicting peasants and highlights the contradictory relationship between form and content, a contradiction that simultaneously makes fun of the peasant and ridicules Italian style. See Jürgen Müller, *Das Paradox* (1999), 82-89. See also Franzsepp Würtenberger, "Zu Bruegels Kunstform. Besonders ihr Verhältnis zur Renaissancekomposition," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, vol. 9 (1940), 30-48.

community: first, the debate around art and nature and, second, the way in which this discussion informs the Pléiade poets' understanding of the term vernacular as applied to language, as well as the way it shapes their program for vernacular cultivation. I will show how the influence of Pléiade poetics in the work of Lucas de Heere and Jan van der Noot, as well as the general attitude regarding the enrichment of the vernacular language emerging among the rederijkers in the sixteenth century, is foundational to better understanding the art theoretical issues at stake in the polemic asserted in De Heere's "Invective."

III.

If compared to the vernacular language in the sixteenth-century Netherlands, especially considering the humanist interest in the "verrijking van de moedertaal," as it is described by Lode van den Branden, our understanding of the term vernacular as applied to the visual arts, defined thus far by style and/or subject matter, should be revisited and expanded.[79] For example, as I mentioned, the literary program of the Pléiade poets, highly influential for the Antwerp rhetoricians Van der Noot and poet/painter De Heere, was to defend the vernacular language and show that it was just as capable of copious, apt and ornate expression as were the languages of Antiquity.[80] Although not a member of the Pléiade group, the movement finds its first advocate in the work of Clément Marot, in whose *Adolescence clémentine* the French language emerged from its medieval dialects to begin its evolution into a syntactically coherent language.[81] Like Du Bellay and Ronsard, Marot defended and sought to cultivate the French language as a vehicle of poetic expression, whereas Latin was still thought by some humanists to be more nuanced and rich in its vocabulary. This idea defined the poetics of the Pléiade, who developed it into a systematic theoretical agenda. Rather than abandoning that which comes natural to their people (French) for a language that

[79] Lode van den Branden, *Het streven naar verheerlijking, zuivering en opbouw van het Nederlands in de 16e eeuw*, Gent: Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Taal- en Letterkunde (1956), 117.
[80] Castor, *Pléiade Poetics* (1964), 8.
[81] Hope Glidden, *Lyrics of the French Renaissance: Marot, Du Bellay*, Ronsard, trans. by Norman R. Shapiro, Chicago: University of Chicago Press (2002), 2.

is indigenous to another region (Latin), these poets advocated a higher and better style for the vernacular and campaigned to encourage the translation and imitation of the ancients and Italians, including the subject matter of classical writers, into one's own vernacular tongue.[82] The ideal was for a poet to be so well-versed in the inner principles that had guided the composition of Ancient literature that he would be able to imaginatively mediate these forms to restructure the vernacular in new and inventive ways. If we take this program for the cultivation of the vernacular language, which characterizes both that of the Pléiade in France and the rhetoricians society in the Netherlands, as a comparable phenomenon to the visual arts, we acquire a model in which both classicist, Italianate forms and subject matter are mediated within the vernacular (language) and not only does it remain the vernacular, it becomes an even better, more enriched, form of expression.

Likewise, I will argue that the later works by Bruegel, peasant scenes and a festival of fools, should also be seen in a comparable light of vernacular cultivation (i.e. an artistic program for local custom that shows innovation and ambition); pictures that mediate visual concepts and pictorial elements employed for history painting, including classical subject matter or biblical stories, into representations of local character. The result is not an antithetical or polemical mode of pitting the "indigenous" against the "foreign" but the promotion of the status and possibilities, both in style and subject matter, for a manner of painting that is increasingly identified with a visual mode specific to the North.[83]

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[82] They understood this initiative to be in itself an imitation of what antique writers did for classical Latin, cultivating the language with Greek forms.

[83] This argument might be compared to Meadow's discussion of Bruegel's *Netherlandish Proverbs*, in which he argues for a similar interaction between classical Latin and the vernacular in regards to proverbs: "The inclusion of Erasmus' classically derived parabolæ, explicitly acknowledged as such, in a collection of vernacular and at times earthy proverbs confirms the slippage between what we now term 'elite' and 'popular' cultures, or perhaps should bring us to question how apt these categories are for the material we are studying […] Where the earliest example of a vernacular proverb collection, the *Proverbia communia*, served as a means for introducing pupils to Latin through the use of familiar, native expressions, we have now reached the point where carefully garnered classical Latin is translated in the vernacular to add to the repertoire of available figures for enriching plays or poems, or everyday conversation." And later, when specifically referring to the stylistic differences between Netherlandish and classicizing artists, the author explains: "As with the relationship between vernacular and classical proverbs, the two styles were seen as engaged in a fruitful interchange and as inalienable parts of a single whole." See Meadow, *Pieter Bruegel's the Elder's Netherlandish Proverbs* (2002), 79, 128. Although he does not mention the Pléiade or vernacular cultivation, Max Dvořák observes this artistic development in Bruegel's earlier works, such as the Adoration of the Magi (1564, London). "Bruegel attempted, in his Adoration of the Magi, to compose a picture that was wholly Italianate in style. He

In order to more fully grasp possible similarities between the process of cultivation for the vernacular language versus the cultivation of a vernacular as applied to the visual arts, it is first necessary to examine the complex and changing interaction between the concepts of art and nature during the mid-sixteenth century, an interaction, I will show, that is foundational for both the cultivation of the visual arts as well as for the Pléiade's definition of language enrichment.[84] To trace the relationship of art and nature for the visual arts in the sixteenth century, I discuss the terms as they are used in another section of Ortelius's eulogy to Bruegel included in his *Album Amicorum*, which praises the artist's talent. I then make a comparison with similar concepts at play in the campaign of the Pléiade.

After discussing two possible culprits of Bruegel's premature passing away, either Death who thought him more advanced in age judging from his artistic skill or Nature who feared his genius would surpass her, Ortelius praises Bruegel by comparing him to a painter from classical antiquity: "The painter Eupompus, it is reported, when asked which of his predecessors he followed, pointed to a crowd of people and said it was Nature herself, not an artist, whom one ought to imitate. This applies also to our friend Bruegel, of whose works I used to speak as hardly works of art, but as works of Nature. Nor should I call him the best of painters, but rather the very nature of painters. He is thus worthy, I claim, of being imitated by them."[85] There is much to consider in this complex comparison of Bruegel to a classical artist and

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was not, however, conforming to any particular model, but rather trying to capture what was essential in the Italian manner of composition and unite it to his own art." See Dvořák, *The History of Art as the History of Ideas*, London: Routledge (1984), 85.

[84] The artistic debate about art and nature extends back to Antiquity and is revisited extensively during the Renaissance, particularly in regards to the issue of imitation. Literature in this field is vast and I can only address one small portion in this chapter. For more general studies, see Anne Eusterschulte, "Imitatio naturae: Naturverständnis und Nachahmungslehre in Malereitraktaten der frühen Neuzeit," in Helmut Laufhütte (ed.), *Künste und Natur in Diskursen der Frühen Neuzeit*, Weisbaden (2000), 701-807; A.J. Close, "Commonplace Theories of Art and Nature in Classical Antiquity and the Renaissance," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 30 (1969), 467-486 and "Philosphical Theories of Art and Nature in Classical Antiquity and the Renaissance," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 32 (1971), 163-184. Specifically in regards to Bruegel, see Meadow, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder's Netherlandish Proverbs*, (2002), 99-152.

[85] Eupompus pictor interrogatus quem sequeretur antecedentium, demonstrate hominum multitudine, dixisse fertur, naturam ipsam imitandam esse, non artificem. Congruet nostro Brugelio hoc, cuius picturas ego minime artificiosas, at naturales appelare soleam. Neque eum optimum pictorem, at naturam pictorum vero dixerim. Dignum itaque indico, quem omnes imitentur. A. Ortelius, Album amicorum, Antwerp, 1573-1576. As translated in Meadow, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder's Netherlandish Proverbs* (2002), 109.

Bruegel to nature. Ortelius's declaration that Bruegel's works are not of art but of Nature itself communicates that his imitation of Nature is so effective that the two become indistinguishable. As Meadow has explained, this can be understood on two levels: on the one hand, Bruegel's paintings imitate Nature to the extent that they are no longer a product of artifice, but nature itself; on the other hand, Bruegel, the artist, imitates Nature so effectively that the painter is not merely an artist, he is equivalent to Nature in his creative abilities.[86] Ronsard's *Hylas* provides a helpful illustration, and poetic parallel, for the imitation of nature as representing the natural world and the imitation of nature as a creative force:

> …I am like a bee
> Which gathers sometimes from the scarlet flower,
> Sometimes from the yellow: drifting from meadow to meadow,
> Flying to the place which appeals to it most,
> Piling up much food for winter:
> In the same way, running and leafing through my books, I accumulate,
> sift and choose the most beautiful,
> Which I sometimes make into one picture with a hundred colors,
> Sometimes into another: and, master of my painting,
> Without forcing myself, I imitate Nature.
>
> (lines 417-26)[87]

Ronsard's metaphor of the bee poignantly describes the two-fold artistic process of imitating nature: reproducing that which has been created while also reenacting the process of production.

Both he and Ortelius's comments refer back to the double meaning of the concept of nature, rooted in classical philosophy of art, which Jan Białostocki labels as "passive" and "active." By passive, Białostocki is referring to the imitation of nature as creation (*natura naturata*), i.e. the reality of daily experience; by active, he means the imitation of nature as creative force (*natura naturans*), its performative creational powers.[88] Ortelius's praise of Bruegel

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[86] Ibid., 108-119.
[87] Pierre de Ronsard, *Oeuvres completes*, ed. P. Laumonier, vol. XV, Paris: Didier (1914-1975), 252. As translated in Michel Jeanneret, *A Feast of Words: Banquets and Table Talk in the Renaissance*, Oxford: Polity Press (1991), 265.
[88] Jan Białostocki, "The Renaissance Concept of Nature and Antiquity," in *The Renaissance and Mannerism, Studies in Western Art, Acts of the Twentieth International Congress of the History of Art*, Vol. II, Princeton: Princeton University Press (1963), 19-30. On the connection between Bruegel and the twofold concept of nature in Van Mander's *Schilder-boeck*, see Hessel Miedema, "Pieter Bruegel

functions on both levels: Bruegel does not merely make art that imitates nature, his creative powers are equated with the creative force of nature itself; therefore, his creations should be imitated by other artists. Through his creative abilities, his identity as an artist is inseparable from that of Nature's. To repeat Ortelius's conclusion: "Nor could I call him the best of painters, but rather the very nature of painters. He is thus worthy, I claim, of being imitated by them."[89] The irony, and important point I want to emphasize, is that Ortelius's concluding declaration contradicts his comparison of Bruegel to Eupompus. On the one hand, Ortelius lauds Bruegel, like Eupompus, for following nature instead of other artists. On the other hand, Ortelius goes onto instruct artists after Bruegel to imitate the artist rather than nature; his work has supplanted nature as the appropriate model. Implicit in this shift is that Bruegel's creational abilities have surpassed not only Nature, but also his classical comparison, Eupompus.

Ortelius's comments speak volumes about Bruegel's gift as a painter but also serve as evidence for the complex relationship between what it means to follow Nature and to follow art in the creative process—especially since there are cases, such as in Bruegel's work, where the two are synonymous with one another. The dual role of the artist in imitating created nature in addition to nature as a creative force can also be paralleled to earlier concepts of *ars* and *ingenium*. *Ars* was the skill or competence that was learnt by rule and imitation; *ingenium* was the innate creative talent that could not be learned. In his *De Oratore*, Cicero explains what is meant by *ingenium*. The term includes natural faculties of sensitivity and imagination, an ability to receive deep impressions which may develop penetrating invention, a capacity for learning, and a retentive memory.[90] Whereas *ars* was acquired from following rules and models, *ingenium* brought with it connotations regarding innovation and imagination natural to the artist.[91] For humanist the two words coupled together, or not, became in the

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weer; en de geloofwaardigheid van Karel van Mander," *Jaarboek Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen* (1998), 309-327.

[89] As translated in Meadow, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder's Netherlandish Proverbs* (2002), 109.

[90] Castor, *Pléiade Poetics* (1964), 42.

[91] Michael Baxandall*, Giotto and the Orators: Humanist Observers of Painting in Italy and the Discovery of Pictorial Composition, 1350-1450*, Oxford: Clarendon Press (1971), 15-16. On the historiography of *ingenium*, see also Patricia Emison, *Creating the Divine Artist: from Dante to Michelangelo,* Leiden: Brill, 2004.

sixteenth century a polemical means of criticism. The association between *ars* (skill) and *ingenium* (imagination) was so intimate that if one were to speak of *ars* alone, especially in the context of praising an artist, the suggestion would be that he had no *ingenium*.[92]

Białostocki argues that two important changes in artistic outlook occurred in the sixteenth century due to the increasing importance of the imaginative creating abilities of the artist: the rule of the imitation of created nature gave way to the appeal to improve upon nature by imitating the antique (art that had already made the ideal selections from nature and therefore could help the modern artist surpass her); but at the same time, since the creational character of art was stressed, the rule of the imitation of nature as creative force increased in significance.[93] An explanation of the first change can be found in Ludovico Dolce (1508-1568): "If then the artist, correcting (nature's) imperfections would 'surpass nature,' would render her fairer than she is, he must be guided by a study of the faultless antique. For the antique is already that ideal nature for which the painter strives and "the ancient statues contain all the perfection of art."[94] The antique thus becomes the ideal, or second nature. Vasari offers an example of the second change when he writes in the preface to the third part of his *Lives* that there appeared in the sixteenth century an artist who surpassed "not only those moderns who have, as it were, vanquished nature but even those most famous ancients who without doubt did so gloriously surpass nature."[95] After emphasizing the genius of Michelangelo, as well as Raphael, in not only surpassing nature but also the art of the ancients, Vasari concludes that the only way for art to progress further is for subsequent painters to emulate the art of these two Italian masters.[96] Implicit in this game of emulation is the ability of the artist to select, imitate, compose and figure

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[92] On the polemical connection between the two in Antique literature, see Robert J. Clements, *Critical Theory and Practice of the Pléide*, New York: Octagon Books (1970), 190. "Pindar writes that the genuine poet is the one whose knowledge comes as a gift of nature; those poets whose wisdom comes only through learning are crows who caw in vain against the godlike bird of Zeus."
[93] Białostocki, "The Renaissance Concept of Nature and Antiquity," (1963), 27.
[94] Rensselaer W. Lee, "Ut Pictura Poesis: The Humanistic Theory of Painting," *Art Bulletin*, vol. 22 (1940), 205.
[95] Georgio Vasari, *Lives of the Artists*, vol. 1, New York: Penguin Press (1987), 327-442; Vasari makes a similar statement about Raphael: "Nature sent Raphael into the world after it had been vanquished by the art of Michelangelo and was ready, through Raphael, to be vanquished by character as well." Ibid., 284.
[96] Lisa Pon, *Raphael, Dürer, and Marcantonio Raimondi: Copying and the Italian Renaissance Print*, New Haven: Yale University Press (2004), 25. See also Emison, *Creating the Divine Artist* (2004).

pictures in such a way that they surpass that from which they adopt.[97] Ortelius's epitaph of Bruegel shows that the circular evolution from imitating nature, to imitating the antique which perfects nature, to imitating that art which vanquishes both—and, therefore, itself becomes the nature that should be imitated—was also known in the North. In just a few lines of praise, Ortelius' comparison of Bruegel and Eupompos indicates that Bruegel's *ingenium*, or innovativeness, was such that he integrated art and nature so perfectly that his work surpassed both nature and his classical counterpart. Regardless of whether or not it is an intentional reference, Ortelius's instruction to subsequent artists that it is Bruegel, not nature or Antiquity, who is the authority that should be imitated creates a status beyond the two similar to the commentary by Vasari about Michelangelo and Raphael.[98]

IV

Debate about the interaction between art and nature is also instrumental for the rise and cultivation of the vernacular language, both in status and use, in comparison to Latin during the sixteenth century. Equally important is the role of *ingenium*, or invention as it is more often referred to by poets in the period, in negotiating the two.[99] Up to the late Middle Ages, certain humanist scholars and writers argued that the

[97] Meadow was the first to connect the process of emulation with Bruegel's work; see *Pieter Bruegel the Elder's Netherlandish Proverbs* (2002), 99-152. On the competitive spirit of emulation, see also G.W. Pigman III, "Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance," *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 33, no. 1 (1980), 1-32 and Greene, *The Light in Troy* (1982).

[98] For a discussion of Vasari's praise of Michelangelo's inventiveness, new forms, and worthiness to be imitated, see D. Summers, *Michelangelo and the Language of Art,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981. That Bruegel's posthumous reputation equaled the Italian masters who for Vasari are the pinnacle of art, specifically Raphael, is suggested by a seventeenth-century drawing that reproduces the portrait of Bruegel from Lampsonius's epigram on the painter. The anonymous copyist added four more lines to the poem, praising Bruegel with formulas taken from Martialis and Bembo's epitaph for Raphael; Jochen Becker, "Hic Ille Est Bruegel.' Beobachtungen zum Bilde Bruegels und zu Raffaels Ruhm anhand des Blattes KDZ 11 949 im Berliner Kupferstichkabinett," in Marc Van Vaeck, et al.(ed.), *De Steen van Alciato: Literatuur en visuele cultuur in de Nederlanden. Opstellen voor prof. dr. Karel Porteman bij zijn emeritaat*, Louvain: Peeters (2003), 161-190. Lucas de Heere asserts the same status to Frans Floris when he says that it will be the name of Floris, not Apelles, that would receive the most honor of all the magnificent painters; Carl van de Velde, *Frans Floris* (1975), 3; Jochen Becker, "Zur Niederländischen Kunstliteratur des 16. Jahrhunderts: Lucas de Heere," *Simiolus*, vol. 6 (1972-3), 114-16.

[99] For a general study of this phenomenon, see Van den Branden, *Het streven naar verheerlijking* (1956).

vernacular language had been neglected in favor of Latin, with the result that it still had only limited powers of expression and little elegance.[100] Whereas the vernacular had followed usage or custom, Latin is regulated by art. The Pléiade argued, therefore, to further develop the vernacular language was a matter of integrating art as much as custom as a regulating factor.

To this end, in his *Deffence et Illustration de la langue françoyse*, Du Bellay recommended a rejection of much of the earlier native, rough French formal tradition and advocated vernacular innovation based on Greek and Roman poetic forms, emulation of specific models, and the creation of neologisms based on Greek and Latin—"si pauvre et nue, qu'elle a besoing des ornementzet…des plumes d'autruy" (so poor and naked, it needs ornaments and … plumes from others).[101] Adjectives, comparisons, periphrasis and other rhetorical devices, and the use of myth were advocated as ways of achieving such an enrichment. The changes, argued Du Bellay, incorporate both style and images and he advocated that poets primarily use odes and sonnets. As an act of innovation, he even encourages the poet to coin new words and to Frenchify Greek and Latin proper names—*dy Hercule, Thesée, Achile, Ulysse, Virgile, Ciceron, Horace*.[102] As Hope Glidden states, "Through the imposition of formal constraints, the Pléiade elevated speech to become song, all the while creating an effect of naturalness in the most artificial of mediums, lyric poetry."[103]

In a famous passage, Du Bellay describes the development of languages as being like the process of grafting and the bearing of fruit. As classical Latin was

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[100] For example, see Joachim Du Bellay, *Deffence et Illustration de la langue françoyse*, ed. Henri Chamard, Paris, 1966 and Castor, *Pléiade Poetics* (1964), 8. See also Fiona Somerset and Nicholas Watson (eds.), *The Vulgar Tongue: Medieval and Post-Medieval Vernacularity*, University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003. A similar situation regarding the neglect of Italian in favor of Latin occurred in Italy a century before; see Sarah Stever Gravelle, "The Latin-Vernacular Question and Humanist Theory of Language and Culture," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 49, no. 3 (July 1988), 367-386.

[101] Clements, *Critical Theory and Practice of the Pléiade* (1970), 189. Michel Jeanneret, *Perpetual Motion: Transforming Shapes in the Renaissance from da Vinci to Montaigne*, Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press (2001), 181. Montaigne deplored the weakness of the language and argued that it was not a lack of words but gaps and imprecision in the conceptual apparatus. Alberti advocates the same for Italian: "Our own tongue will have no less power [than Latin] as soon as learned men decide to refine and polish it by zealous and arduous labors;" Gravelle, "The Latin-Vernacular Question" (1988), 381.

[102] Dorothy Gabe Coleman, *The Chaste Muse: A Study of Joachim Du Bellay's Poetry*, Leiden: Brill (1980), 20.

[103] Glidden, *Lyrics of the French Renaissance* (2002), 19.

formed and enriched by the remains of Greek, so French poets should reproduce the efforts of classical and Italian writers, germinating the vernacular from seeds sown by both languages. Ronsard uses the same analogy of grafting to describe the interweaving of the petrarchan intertext into his own work.[104] In the first preface to his fifty sonnets dedicated to *L'Olive* (1549), Du Bellay says freely that he has imitated Petrarch: "Vrayment je confesse avoir imité Petrarque, et non luy seulement, mais aussi l'Arioste et d'autres modernes Italiens: pource qu'en l'argument que je traicte, je n'en ay point trouvé de meilleurs."[105] But, in the 1550 preface he has to justify himself against the criticism of *L'Olive*, particularly that of plagiarism, and describes his process of assimilation:

> Si, par la lecture des bons livres, je me suis imprimé quelgues traictz en la fantasie, qui après, venant à exposer mes petites conceptions selon les occasions qui m'en sont données, me coulent beaucoup plus facilement en la plume qu'ilz ne me reviennent en la memoire, doibt-on pour ceste raison les appeler pieces rapportées? […] en mes escriptz y a beaucoup plus de naturelle invention que d'artificielle ou superstitieuse immitation.[106]

Similarly, Ronsard's *Amours* and *Sonets pour Helene* contain many motifs and images for which parallels can readily be found in Petrarch's *Rime* and in the works of his Italian imitators.[107] However, as Castor explains, it is also suggested in the first sonnet of the *Sonets pour Helene* that to some extent this will be an "anti-petrarchan" collection—or rather that there will be clear (ironic) variations from the standard petrarchan patterns. Just one example is that instead of emphasizing fate as the inspiration to love, as is often the case with Petrarch, Ronsard credits self-determination. In doing so, the concept of 'chance' is substituted, or at least is a deflating antithesis, for the petrarchan 'destiny'. Through the subtle, even allusive, references to Petrarch throughout the poem, albeit primarily in an antithetical way, Ronsard indicates that he is both accepting the petrarchan conventions while simultaneously using them as a kind of melody against which to set his own

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[104] Jeanneret, *A Feast of Words* (1991), 266.
[105] Joachim Du Bellay, *L'Olive*, with notes and introduction by E. Caldorini, Geneva: Droz (1974), 169.
[106] Ibid., 50. For elaboration on the various ways in which Du Bellay mediates Petrarchian texts and ideas, as well as those of antique writers, in his poetry, see Coleman, *The Chaste Muse* (1980).
[107] For an elaboration on the similarities, and differences, see Grahame Castor, "Petrarchism and the quest for beauty in the Amours of Cassandre and the Sonets pour Helene," in Terence Cave (ed.), *Ronsard the Poet*, London: Methuen & Co. (1973), 79-120.

counterpoints that are often ironic in nature.[108] These two poems by Du Bellay and Ronsard offer poignant examples of the central creative principle for Pléiade poetics: in familiarizing himself with the work of model authors, the would-be poet should concern himself not simply with imitating its outward appearance, but more with the inner principles which had guided its composition [motifs, diction, formulas, themes, image patterns], then innovatively mediate these forms to restructure their own poetic voice in the vernacular language.[109]

The Pléiade's theories of imitation and rules for composition were based on the assumption that any writer of the time, no matter how great his natural talents, could learn to write better through rules of art. The forms that dominate the poetic production of the poets are the Petrarchan sonnet cycle and the Horatian / Anacreontic ode (of the 'wine, women and song variety, often making use of the Horatian "carpe diem" topos). Throughout the period, the use of mythology is frequent, but so too is a depiction of the natural world (landscapes, woods, seas and rivers).[110] In his *Divers Jeux rustiques*, Du Bellay describes an ideal landscape full of the harvest of wheat and grape-rich wine. Written during his stay in Rome, the poems vividly paint the fields of the countryside and the peasants who inhabit them. Such poetry about "natural" surroundings would seem to avoid learned allusion. However, Glidden points out that the *Divers Jeux rustiques* are derivative, in one case, referencing the Neo-Latin poet André Navagero, friend of Bembo and Raphael in Rome, and author of the Latin collection Lusus (1530), from which poems II-XIII in Du Bellay's collection are taken.[111] Du Bellay's borrowing does not boast originality, but rather his gift for absorbing into French the elements it needs to enrich it.

As a result of the emphasis on the translation and mediation of ancient and Italian models into one's own vernacular tongue, issues of imitation and invention, *ars* and *ingenium* were at the center of Pléiade poetic theory. Whereas *ars* was the skill or competence that was learnt by rule and imitation, following nature represented two

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[108] Ibid., 100-101.
[109] They advocated the adjustment not only of words and word order but also the entire economy of the sentence structure and distribution of literary forms; Jeanneret, *Perpetual Motion* (2001), 193.
[110] Michel Simonin (ed.), *Dictionnaire des letters françaises—Le XVIe siécle*, Paris: Fayard, 2001. See also G. Demerson, *La mythologie classique dans l'oeuvre lyrique de la Pléiade*, Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1972.
[111] Glidden, *Lyrics of the French Renaissance* (2002), 13.

aspects of the creative process. On the one hand, one's immediate surroundings constitute nature. On the other hand, only that which is an innate quality of the artist, not learned, is natural, such as creativity, imagination and *ingenium*. Therefore, these attributes can be polished and improved by *ars*, but they cannot originally be produced in a man by *ars* if he does not already possess them.[112] Following this line of thought, one's own language, argued the Pléide members, represents one's immediate surroundings, a "natural" gift, whereas other languages than one's own must be acquired through learning. Therefore, to truly follow nature in making art one must employ this natural "gift." The vernacular language is an example of "nature," what comes innately, but, according to Jacques Peletier du Mans (1517-1582), demands the aid of an artisan hand. For Peletier, writing in French (or presumably whatever tongue is native) is preferable to Latin because it is the natural condition, perhaps requiring the refinement of artifice for perfection, but natural nonetheless. Latin, and other non-native languages, are comparatively more removed into the sphere of artifice, requiring as they do the discipline of schooling.[113] Although the vernacular language (nature) should be one's form of communication, other more decorative, cultivated languages (art) should be used to improve it. Thus, Nature provides the material (language) and an indication of what is to be made of it (invention); Art then looks after the actual fashioning. As Peletier explains: "Nature donne la disposicion, e comme une matiere: "l'Art donne l'operacion, e comme la form…Nature ouure le chemin, e le montre au doę: l'Art conduit, e garde de se deuoyer….An somme, la Nature bien demande le secours e la mein artisane: E l'Art, ne peut rien sans le naturęl….Ensi, Nature, sera difuse par tout son ouurage: e l'Art męlé par toute sa Nature."[114] Art and nature are each dependent upon the other in the production of a work of poetry.[115] The culmination, or goal, of this process is that once custom and art are skillfully integrated

[112] Castor, *Pléiade Poetics* (1964), 42.
[113] Meadow, "Bruegel's *Procession to Calvary*" (1996), 198.
[114] As reprinted in Castor, *Pléiade Poetics* (1964), 46. In his *La Deffence*, Du Bellay argues that a language is like a plant but left to itself it will remain wild and sterile. Unless nature is sustained, regulated, and guided, it produces nothing worthwhile.
[115] Clements, *Critical Theory and Practice of the Pléiade* (1970), 210; Castor, *Pléiade Poetics* (1964), 46. Dante expresses a similar view toward the nobility of the vernacular over Latin; see John A. Scott, *Understanding Dante*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press (2004), 35-62, 109-112.

as the regulating factors, one's vernacular language would become so much better that it would surpass Latin in its eloquence and expressive capabilities.[116]

Although sixteenth-century writers of the Pléiade never offer a formal definition for invention, its importance for the creative process described above is consistently central throughout their theoretical work.[117] The etymological meaning of invention indicates a "coming into." The concept is not so much that of producing something entirely new, but rather that of coming into and revealing for the first time something which already exists.[118] As a result, invention is often set against imitation, taken in the sense of following literary models. While in imitation the poet is drawing upon other authors for his material, when he invents he is relying entirely upon himself. The Pléiade always insisted that it was incumbent upon the poet not to stop short at the level of imitation, but to go on to the higher stage of invention.[119] Donald Maddox interprets the writing of Du Bellay to say that invention is a process which envelopes two modes: imaginative and imitative. The first is a "natural" product of perception and imagination (that which is a gift and cannot be learned) and the second is a product of these *plus* "artificial" authorial models (such as classical texts). In the context of the Pléiade program, two "gifts" are engaged which represent the two aspects of nature previously mentioned: the vernacular language (one's natural surroundings) and the natural "inventive" abilities of the poet. Both aspects of nature are then cultivated by the study and imitation of Latin and Antiquity.[120] Despite the fact that it might take a century, the idea, or goal, is that this imaginative process of integrating art and nature will culminate in the cultivation of poetry written in the vernacular language such that

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[116] The concerted effort of the Romans to perfect Latin was constantly imposed as a model to follow. To enrich their indigent speech, the Romans employed Greek remains, making plunder a means of cultural promotion. In the first chapters of *La Deffence*, Du Bellay lingered admiringly on the method of systematic appropriation and development of patrimony that made the Romans what they were. He exhorted his readers to fight in turn for the cause of French and to broaden it by grabbing all available resources, antique and modern, local and foreign; Jeanneret, *Perpetual Motion* (2001), 183.

[117] For a detailed analysis on the indeterminacy, yet defining role of invention in Pléiade poetics, see Donald Maddox, "Inventing Invention: process in Pléiade poetics," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, vol. 15 (1985), 211-230.

[118] Ibid., 218.

[119] Castor, *Pléiade Poetics* (1964), 115.

[120] In *La Deffence*, Du Bellay argues that inspiration and innate qualities are passive dispositions and, being "natural," must be relayed by effort, actualized by will and technique, if they are to engender masterpieces; Jeanneret, *Perpetual Motion* (2001), 184.

it supplants classical texts as the model to be imitated.[121] In this explanation, we hear an echo of similar emulative processes active in the visual arts between art, nature and antiquity that is represented in both Vasari's praise of Michelangelo and Ortelius's praise of Bruegel.

The Pléiade program was well known in the Netherlands. As I mentioned, Lucas De Heere and Jan van der Noot, though not members of the group, were prominent advocates of the cause. In Dutch literary history, Van der Noot is generally considered to be the first major Renaissance poet. Knuvelder explains that in the Netherlands, the awareness of poetic genius was established by the high opinion of the poet's task and the place of beauty in society and Van der Noot is the herald of the new time.[122] He lived in Antwerp and was a faithful follower of Ronsard.[123] He produced the first collection of lyrical Renaissance poems, *Het Bosken*, in Antwerp in 1567. His second collection, *Het Theatre oft Toonneel* (dedicated to Petrarch and Du Bellay), was published in 1568 and shows especially the influence of Ronsard in the sonnet and song forms.

The love poetry of *Het Bosken* is typical Pléiade poetry: sonnets and odes composed in a metre previously unknown in Dutch literature, many of them adaptations from Ronsard, some Jean-Antoine Du Baïf, and others from Petrarch.[124] Consistent with the Pléiade, Van der Noot believed that other languages should be plundered for the betterment of one's own native tongue: "For it had already been in fashion to adorn Flemish with Italian words and phrases, to make it Italianate or 'Petrarchian.'"[125] K. ter Laan explains that he has the merit of representing the Pléiade in the Netherlands and succeeds in translating sonnets and odes (the new poetic form)

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[121] Greene, *The Light in Troy* (1982), 189

[122] G.P.M. Knuvelder, *Handboek tot de geschiedenis der Nederlandse letterkunde, dl. 2,*'s-Hertogenbosch: Malmberg, (1971), 126. On the influence of Van der Noot, see K.J.S. Bostoen, *Dichterschap en Koopmanschap in de zestiende eeuw*, Deventer: SUB ROSA, 1987.

[123] He came in contact with Ronsard during his stay in France while fleeing religious persecution from the Duke of Alba; see F. Jos. van den Branden en J.G. Frederiks, *Biographisch woordenboek der Noord- en Zuidnederlandsche letterkunde*, Amsterdam: L.J. Veen, 1888-91.

[124] Carlo A. Zaalberg, *'Das Buch Extasis' van Jan van der Noot*, Assen: van Gorcum and Co. (1954), 252.

[125] "'t was immers reeds mode geworden zijne taal met Italiaansche woorden en spreekwijzen op te sieren, te Italianiseeren of te Petrarquiseeren" (my translation). G.P.M. Knuvelder, 'Jan van der Noot (ca. 1539-ca. 1600)'" *Handboek tot de geschiedenis der Nederlandse letterkunde*, *dl. 2*, 115.

with a delicate touch.[126] Significantly, Lucas de Heere is the only poet he ever praises by name.

De Heere also greatly valued the Dutch language; the majority of his literary work, including his anthology of poems in *Den hof en boomgaerd der Poësien,* are written in the vernacular. According to Waterschoot, as a rhetorician De Heere felt obligated to embellish his own language with countless borrowed words, as well as to hopelessly mix the sentence constructions for the sake of his "reghels mate."[127] Although *Den hof en boomgaerd* is written in Dutch, the structure of the poems introduce for the first time in the Netherlands what De Heere called "reghels mate," which is based on French meter.[128] Like Van der Noot, his goal was to mediate, even translate, style and subject matter from French literature and classical antiquity into his native tongue. Regarding the state of his former vernacular tradition, De Heere writes in the dedication of his collection that the "ouden vlaemschen treyn van dicten zijn in veel zaken te ruut, ongheschickt en rouw (uncivilized, unsuitable / unqualified, bad / rough)." In referring to his own vernacular tradition as "uncivilized, bad and rough," De Heere, like Du Bellay in his *Deffence*, sets forth his enterprise of cultivation.[129] After rejecting old Flemish diction as something to imitate, De Heere instead combines the vernacular with formal elements from more cultivated languages, such as French and Latin, in order to enrich it. Regarding the *Den Hof en Boomgaerd*, G. Kalf writes, "De Heere realized that he was producing something new. With regard to his 'verses, poems or rhymes,' he knew and followed more Latin, French and German examples."[130] De Heere calls himself an imitator of Latin and French poets, both in matters of subject and meter, and he exhorts his readers to enrich and magnify their own Dutch language by following the French models. As a result, the poetry in his

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[126] K. ter Laan, *Letterkundig woordenboek voor Noord en Zuid*, Den Haag: Van Goor (1952), 375.
[127] Lucas de Heere, *Den hof en boomgaerd der Poësien*, W. Waterschoot (1969), xxviii.
[128] S. Eringa writes about the "Invective" that "Cette pièce appartient à genre devenu à la mode en France depuis la fameuse querelle de Marot et de Sagon. Nous n'y avons pas relevé d'emrunts directs au grand satirique français du seizième siècle." Waterschoot, *Den hof en boomgaerd der poesien* (1969), 102.
[129] For a comparison between De Heere's *Den Hof en Boomgaerd* and the work of Ronsard and Du Bellay, see S. Eringa, *La Renaissance et Les Rhétoriqueurs Néerlandais: Matthieu de Casteleyn, Anna Bijns, Luc de Heere*, Amsterdam, 1920.
[130] "De Heere zelf beseft, dat hij met iets nieuws komt. Wat zijne 'vaersen, dichten oft rithmen' betreft, zoo bekent hij Latijnsche, Fransche en Hoogduitsche voorbeelden meer te hebben gevolgd." (my translation) G. Kalf, "Dichters en Proza-schrijvers uit Noord- en Zuid-Nederland', 'Zuid-Nederlanders', 'Lucas de Heere'" in *Geschiedenis der Nederlandsche letterkunde*, Deel 3 (1907), 330-335.

collection is extremely heterogeneous. It starts with a translation of Marot's (1497-1544) 'Le Temple de Cupidon'. The subsequent pages contain no fewer than twenty-two adaptations of poems by Marot; among them such typical Marot genres as two 'blasons' and one 'Du Coq a l'Asne'. Moreover, the structure of the collection—the succession of epigrams, New Year's wishes, epitaphs and epistles—clearly follows the pattern of sixteenth-century Marot editions after the model of Antoine Constantin published in 1544 and are all new genres in Dutch literature.[131]

Although it is safe to assume that both De Heere's poems and his agenda for the cultivation of the vernacular language would have been known in his artistic community, it is also important to note that the defense for the use of Dutch was echoed in the rhetorician societies (*rederijkerkamers*), a literary community to which De Heere and Van der Noot belonged. In fact, in the introduction to his *Den hof en boomgaerd*, De Heere provides a defense of the chambers of rhetoric, which he sees as institutions for the encouragement of the use of the vernacular.[132] Van den Branden writes that, "The enrichment of the vernacular language through translating ideas or following concepts from classical antiquity or contemporaneous foreign works also drew the attention of the rhetoricians. The Leidse town secretary Jan van Hout, who so vehemently argued against those who misused the name of rhetorician, was someone who the rhetoricians urged time and time again to improve and enrich their language."[133] In 1541, Jan Gymnick compared the poor state of the vernacular to Latin and asserted that the only way Latin authors were able to enrich their own language into the model of elegance that is classical Latin is by appropriating "diverse forms of speaking from other languages [Greek]." With equivalent efforts expended to improve

[131] W. Waterschoot, "Marot or Ronsard? New French Poetics among Dutch Rhetoricians in the Second Half of the 16th Century," in J. Koopmans et al (ed.), *Rhetoric-Rhetoriqueurs-Rederijkers*, Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen (1995), 146. De Heere acquired familiarity with French literature during 1559-1560 when he stayed in Paris as an artist in the service of the queen-mother, Catherine de Medici. Not only does De Heere introduce new literary forms from France into the Low Countries, he translates many French poems, sometimes giving them a local twist. For example, the poem "Vanden Hane op den Esel" is partially based on Marot's "Du Coq á l'asne," but alludes to the endemic political situation; Waterschoot, "Lucas de Heere" (1969), 90.

[132] De Heere (1969), 3-4.

[133] "Verrijking van de moedertaal via vertaling van begrippen of navolging van denkbeelden uit de Klassieke Oudheid of uit contemporaine buitenlandse werken stond ook de rederijkers daarbij voor ogen. De Leidse stadssecretaris Jan van Hout, die zo duchtig te keer kon gaan tegen hen die de naam van rederijker misbruikten, was iemand die de rederijkers keer op keer aanspoorde om hun taal te verbeteren en te verrijken." (my translation) Van den Branden, *Het streven naar verheerlijking,* (1956), 117-126.

Dutch, he saw no reason it should not rise to similar or even greater heights.[134] In his discussion of the rederijker's emphasis on using their native language for classical literature, Walter Gibson, one of the first few scholars to discuss at length the importance of the relationship between artists and rederijkers, explains that they also disseminated a humanist culture through the subjects that they drew from ancient mythology.[135] For example, the story of Pyramus and Thisbe was reworked into several contemporary plays. Furthermore, many chambers of rhetoric counted artists among their members; the *Violieren* in Antwerp, for instance, was directly associated with the artists's St. Lucas Guild (De Heere and Bruegel were members). These close ties would have provided the place and opportunity for discussions about such interdisciplinary theoretical matters and led to mutual influence and an exchange of ideas in respect to themes, subject matter, presentation and structure. Their interaction is significant not only with respect to individual artists or particular themes, but also for broader contextual research, such as similarities between artistic topics and cultural development.[136] Gibson writes that "artists and poets drew from a common fund of subject matter […] In these chambers, artist and poet could be united in the same individual, and where they were not, they seem to have collaborated on numerous projects."[137] In his study on drama and processional culture between the Middle Ages and Modern Era, Bart Ramakers discusses the interaction of various forms of artistic production—rederijkers, poets, artists—in the implementation of theatrical processions, an event for which the guild that represented these professions was largely responsible.[138] Rhetoricians such as Matthijs de Castelein (1485-1550), Ramakers

[134] Meadow, "Bruegel's *Procession to Calvary*" (1996), 199.
[135] Walter Gibson, "Artists and Rederijkers in the Age of Bruegel," *Art Bulletin*, vol. 63, no. 3 (1981), 430. There are, of course, earlier important studies. See, for example, G. Brom, *Schilderkunst en Literatuur in de 16e en 17e eeuw*, Utrecht and Antwerp, 1957; H.A.E. van Gelder, *Erasmus, schilders en rederijkers. De religieuze crisis der 16de eeuw weerspiegeld in toneel- en schilderkunst*, Groningen: Nordhoff, 1959.
[136] Gibson, "Artists and Rederijkers" (1981), 427, 435.
[137] Ibid., 446.
[138] Bart Ramakers, *Spelen en Figuren: Toneelkunst en processiecultuur in Oudenaarde tussen Middeleeuwen en Moderne Tijd*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996. See also Ramakers, "Bruegel en de rederijkers: Schilderkunst en literatuur in de zestiende eeuw", in *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek,* vol. 47, Zwolle: Waanders (1997), 80-105.

explains, began to incorporate motifs from antique literature into his texts for *omkeringsfeesten*, which were originally manifestations of folk culture/local custom.[139]

This brief exposition on the theoretical framework of Pléiade poetics and its influence in the work of Van der Noot and De Heere, as well as the general attitude regarding the cultivation of the vernacular language emerging among the rederijkers in the sixteenth century, is foundational to understanding the art theoretical issues addressed in De Heere's "Invective." If we understand that De Heere prized the vernacular, yet believed that it should be enriched by mediating styles and forms from other more decorative, cultivated languages, we acquire a model through which to better assess the opinions he expresses about the visual arts. The rebuttal articulated by De Heere in defending Floris, criticizing the anonymous painter's style as "unmannered" and "full of wretched, bad strokes," is reminiscent of his evaluation of earlier Flemish poetry, that it is "uncivilized, bad and rough." Yet, his instruction to his fellow poets is not to abandon the vernacular language for Latin or French, rather to understand and utilize "the inner principles that guide their composition" and use them to innovatively cultivate their own language. Similarly, we can understand his disparagement of the *quidam* painter, that he had "been to Rome, it is a pitiful thing / That occurred…That you have been to Rome, one cannot see / In your paintings…That truly look neither Romish, nor antique," has little to do with the fact that the painter's style is not Italianate, rather that he did not take the opportunity to learn from Italian methods to enrich his own native style. Although De Heere's poem campaigns for good painting (as opposed to wretched, bad strokes)—and he implies that Romish or antique defines, at least in part, what he determines as good—if one takes into consideration the contemporary literary agenda for the vernacular language and the creative process by which it is to be cultivated, his focus is rather on an imaginative integration of artistic forms, especially one that considers and experiments with styles and standards outside one's local custom.[140]

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[139] Ramakers, *Spelen en Figuren* (1996), 123.

[140] Lucas de Heere stands in a longer line of important figures who took it as their responsibility to define and develop artistic norms and values specific to the North. As a student of Frans Floris, he was also directly connected with the thought of Dominicus Lampsonius and Lambert Lombard. These three men are very similar in that each person was a practicing artist, visual and/or literary, and each wrote tracts describing and appraising the art of their period, especially in regards to the way in which Italians were making and discussing art. Beginning in the early 1560's, both Lampsonius and Lombard

Sixteenth-century readers would have understood the polemic in De Heere's poem not to be between Northern and Southern artistic practices, rather as one advocating ambition and invention and addressing the means by which an artist should cultivate his work. It is a representation of an emerging judgment in the North about what constitutes "good" art, a judgment that is defined by an imaginative exploration and mediation of visual concepts and pictorial elements—both from inside and outside the Netherlands, whether they be German, French or Italian—into one's own vernacular visual mode. It is not the local custom of Netherlandish art *per se* that De Heere campaigns against in his disparaging remarks against the anonymous painter, rather he criticizes the way in which this mode is employed. As with the vernacular language, if anything like a Northern artistic tradition existed for De Heere, his agenda was not that it be abandoned in favour of a classicist, Italianate model. On the contrary, his concern was that it be developed into a more ambitious and elegant presentation.

In addition, Freedberg has argued that since De Heere's "Invective" campaigns for a classicist style of painting and against a Northern tradition that rejects such influences—represented by the anonymous painter—a contradiction arises between his visual and literary aesthetic.[141] For example, De Heere praises Floris's "Italianate" art in a poem that is written in "the coarse language of the Flemish populace," rather than Latin verse. The reason, Freedberg claims, is because De Heere is criticizing the anonymous painter for having had access to the culturally privileged model of the antique, but did not avail himself of that opportunity, opting instead to turn to the crude local traditions of Netherlandish art. Therefore, "Instead of praising by allusion to the

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corresponded with prominent figures in Italy, including Vasari, Titian and Giulio Clovio. While their correspondence praised the art of Italy, as well as the texts that describe its history, the letters also indicate that their reception of the Italian tradition was not without reservation; for example, in a letter to Vasari, Lampsonius offers his own suggestions for revisions to the Vité based on his allegiance to and appreciation of his Northern heritage. He suggests landscape as equivalent to history painting. See G. Denhaene, "Lambert Lombard et la Peinture Flamande de la Renaissance dans la Littérature Artistique," in *Relations Artistiques entre les Pays-Bas et L'Italie á la Renaissance: Études Dédiées à Suzanne Sulzberger*, Rome: Academia Belgica (1980), 101-121 and Jochen Becker, "Zur niederländischen Kunstliteratur des 16. Jahrhunderts: Domenicus Lampsonius," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, vol. 24 (1973), 45-61. Walter Melion argues that Lampsonius characterizes the art of Lombard as a hybrid, one who takes a Northern stance toward Italian painting, yet implements Tuscan and Venetian criteria that revise his painting and drawing; see Melion, *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon* (1991), 165.

[141] Freedberg, "Allusion and Topicality," (1989), 62.

best classical sources, [De Heere's 'Invective'] damns by descending to the level of the popular language of abuse."[142]

Having discussed the emerging status of the vernacular, and in particular De Heere's affinity for it, the argument that the low form of the poem matches the low form of the anonymous painter, that the painter/poet intentionally chose to write in the "vigorous" vernacular in order to emphasis his disdain for "crude local tradition," does not accurately characterize the sixteenth-century literary context of the poem, nor how contemporary readers would have understood De Heere's use of the vernacular. In fact, the exact opposite is the case. Waterschoot writes that De Heere's *Den Hof en Boomgaerd* is a complex work: old and new forms, medieval and modern ideas are equally present. The influence of the new, of the Renaissance, is most striking.[143] The construction of De Heere's anthology of poems illustrates what for him is the literary ideal, a heterogeneous compilation of forms and styles mediated in the vernacular, and praises an artist whom he deems to be the visual artistic equivalent of his literary enterprise. The logical conclusion is that De Heere did not understand Floris to be someone who, as modern art historians claim, abandoned the Northern style and wholeheartedly adopted the new Italian idiom.[144] Furthermore, the hybrid nature of his poetry served to emphasize the contrast between his ambitious literary agenda and the uniform—probably in De Heere's mind, lazy—mode of the anonymous painter.

Scholars have also interpreted the final praise by Ortelius in his eulogy to Bruegel as being representative of a polemic between northerners who "follow nature" and Italians who strive to idealize it. To summarize my earlier comments, Ortelius pays tribute to Bruegel by saying that he does not share the fault of many artists who "add to the painting some ornament and charm of their own thereby destroying the whole character of the likeness, so that they fail to achieve the resemblance at which they aim."[145] Freedberg, Meadow and ten Brink Goldsmith argue that this statement criticizes those painters who attempt to idealize their work, that by adding

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[142] Ibid.
[143] Lucas de Heere, *Den Hof en Boomgaerd* (1969), XXIV.
[144] For an additional argument that De Heere understood Floris to paint in the Netherlandish tradition, see Melion*, Shaping the Netherlandish Canon* (1991), 134.
[145] See n. 66.

ornamentation or elaboration of their own, they depart from the model of nature before them and, therefore, from "true beauty."[146]

However, regarding Ortelius's remarks Hessel Miedema observes that it is clear language; but it is humanist language: it is a citation from an antique text and it says nothing about a Northern mindset in contrast to an Italian one."[147] If we look to the antique source that Ortelius directly refers to in the text, the precise meaning of his praise becomes a bit more ambivalent. The passage comes from Eunapius's *Lives of the Philosophers and Sophists*, in which the author critiques Iamblichus's biography of Alypius. In recounting the life and works of that figure, according to Eunapius, Iamblichus often included pointless anecdotal elaborations and obscured the narrative by his own stylistic extravagances.[148] Although several scholars argue that, as used by Ortelius, this reference refers to the tendency to embellish or over-ornament, to value art over nature, a fault that somehow characterizes Italianists, the antique source indicates that "to destroy the whole character of the likeness," as stated by Ortelius, could have more to do with the obstruction of narrative rather than the idealization of nature. If this is the case, sixteenth-century humanist readers would have understood Ortelius's statements as having little to do with a North/South polemic, rather with disciplined ornamentation and the clarity of narrative, issues that were also of particular importance for Italianate painting.

In his book *On Painting*, published in Italy in 1554, Alberti also takes up this classical model when he offers his own criticism of an anonymous painter, whom Michael Baxandall argues is Pisanello.[149] Abundant diversity seemed to be the emphasis of Pisanello and the humanist descriptions of his paintings, with little emphasis on narrative relevance. In reaction to this, Alberti writes, "I should wish this *copia* to be *ornata* with a degree of *varietas*, and also *gravis* and *moderata* with

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[146] An additional reference to Bruegel as an artist who refused to idealize his painted subjects is found in the form of a distich on the back of his painting of *The Cripples*: "What nature lacks, is lacking in our art, / So great was the grace accorded to our painter. / Here nature, expressed in painted forms, is astonished / To see through these cripples that Bruegel is her equal." See Meadow, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder's Netherlandish Proverbs* (2002), 117.
[147] Hessel Miedema, review of Melion, *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon*, *Oud Holland*, vol. 107 (1993), 156. See also Miedema, "Pieter Bruegel weer" (1998).
[148] Meadow, *Pieter Bruegel* (2002), 113. Regarding this source, particularly the translation by Hadrianus Junius, see Jan Muylle, "Pieter Bruegel en Abraham Ortelius" (1981).
[149] Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators* (1971), 135.

dignitas and *verecundia.* I certainly condemn those painters who, because they wish to seem *copiosi* or because they wish nothing left empty*,* on that account pursue no *compositio*. But indeed they scatter everything around in a confused and *dissolutus* way, on which account the *historia* seems not to enact but rather disorder its matter."[150] Alberti's criticism specifically refers to his desire for a composition to be clear, yet copious, in enabling its narrative. According to him, the false pursuit of *ornatus* (variation from the ordinary and commonplace) and *copiosus* (profusion or abundance) led to *dissolutus*, the opposite of *compositus* and what the florid style fell into if not disciplined.[151] For Alberti, the very basis for these artistic instructions is grounded in nature: in the preface to his book he writes, "I will enlarge on the art of painting from its first principles in nature."[152] As artistic categories, they are a means to an end, namely to insure naturalness. But, when pursued as ends in themselves, their artificiality overruns the composition.

Conclusion

I have been careful not to suggest that, in general, a polemic did not exist between a classicist, Italianate style of painting and a Northern practice which rejected such models and held fast to local customs for their artistic expression. This is not my issue. Rather, I have focused specifically on whether or not such a polemic is represented in particular texts by De Heere and Ortelius in order to counter the argument that these texts somehow illustrate that such a polemic typifies the work of Bruegel. On the contrary, it is my contention that Bruegel's later scenes of peasants and foolish revelries would have been viewed during the period in similar, or at least comparable, terms as the campaign of the Pléiade group and rederijkers for the cultivation of the vernacular language; only Bruegel's efforts are directed to developing and enriching a visual, rather than linguistic, vernacular style.

As I have shown, within the visual arts the vibrant, emulative discourse around art and nature, imitation and invention characterizes and informs both Ortelius's

[150] As reproduced and translated by Baxandall, Ibid., 136.
[151] Ibid., 137.
[152] Białostocki, "The Renaissance Concept of Nature and Antiquity" (1963), 22.

assessment of Bruegel's art as well as the cultivation of the vernacular language. I argue that if one takes De Heere's collection of poems in *Den Hof en Boomgaerd* as a whole, written in Flemish using Greek, Latin and French meters, among other formal and stylistic references, coupled with passages of old Flemish diction, we can understand his "Invective" as advocating that the cultivation of painting, like contemporary poetry, is a process of negotiating similar heterogeneous sources. If we read the art theoretical ideas expressed in the "Invective" in this broader context, the term vernacular as applied to the visual arts can be expanded. Rather than representing something that is exclusively "other than" or antithetical to that which is foreign, we can redefine the concept to include a visual mode that is associated with a specific region, yet can mediate styles and subject matter from outside its indigenous tradition and not only does it remain within a vernacular idiom, according to readers, or viewers, of the period it becomes even better.

Understanding this complex practice of art-making, creating a hybrid picture that is at the same time grounded in a vernacular style, I will argue in Chapter Three that the unique formal presentation of Bruegel's pictures of peasants participates in a visual and viewing culture that is rooted in an analytical approach to art—an ongoing discussion in which Bruegel takes a particular position about how art should look and function. As a result, the pictures beg the viewer to engage in a visual analysis and unravel, or dissect, and put back together, the complexities of their making. This process inspires questions from the viewer on a number of different levels that have to do with ideas and assumptions about art as much as the different socio-cultural contexts of the peasant and viewer. Rather than thinking about these later works solely as representative of his sympathy with or objective distance from the peasant class, I suggest these witty paintings should also be understood, even more fundamentally, as statements about art *per se*; an effort toward cultivation, to show that his "visual language," both in style and subject, was just as capable of copious, apt and ornate expression. I now turn to the contemporary setting that would have provided Bruegel's viewers the context, and inspiration, to interact with and discuss these multivalent pictures on such a deep level, an environment which valued analytical discussions that engaged such diverse topics as art, religion and social behavior on multiple levels of inquiry.

Chapter Two

Art, Conversation and the *Convivium* Tradition

Similar to his earlier paintings of the *Series of the Seasons* for Nicolaes Jonghelink, it is likely that Bruegel's *Peasant Wedding Banquet* hung in the dining room of the wealthy merchant Jean Noirot.[153] Noirot, a former Master of the Mint in Antwerp, whose bankruptcy led to the auction of his estate in 1572, was also a wealthy patron. His collection included a large number of paintings by major Flemish artists, such as Hieronymus Bosch and Frans Floris, and among them were five by Bruegel, one of which was described as a large peasant wedding banquet painted in oil on wood.[154] Luc Smolderen has pointed out that it is probably this same painting, the second highest valued work in Noirot's collection, that was acquired by the city due to Noirot's financial troubles and subsequently bought in July 1594 in Brussels by Archduke Ernst, along with Bruegel's *Series of the Seasons*, who then took the work to Vienna where they eventually made their way to the Kunsthistorisches Museum.[155] The inventory for the sale of Noirot's collection reports that the large peasant wedding banquet hung in the *achtereetkamer* (back dining room), along with three other paintings by Bruegel and portraits of Noirot's family.[156] Claudia Goldstein argues that the decision to hang these specific pictures, some of the most valuable in Noirot's collection, in this dining space indicates the room's prominence. The four Bruegel paintings—combined in the same space with the family portraits also on display—

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[153] For a discussion on the location and function of Bruegel's *Series of the Seasons* in the setting of a dining room, see Goldstien, "Keeping Up Appearances" (2003).

[154] "Item een groot tafereel van eender boeren bruyloft van P. Bruegel." Smolderen, "Tableaux de Jérôme Bosch, de Pierre Bruegel L'Ancien et de Frans Floris" (1995), 38.

[155] Ibid., 33-41. Smolderen points out that Noirot's collection was considerable and on par with other Masters of the Mint, including Jongelinck, and the master in Middelburg who owned several paintings by Pieter Aertsen. The Middelburg Mint Master Melchior Wijntgis was an avid collector of art and close friend of Karel van Mander. For further commentary on this discovery, see Philippe and Françoise Roberts-Jones, *Bruegel* (2002), 278; Goldstein, "Artifacts of Domestic Life" (1996).

[156] Archives Generales du Royaume, Bruxelles, 3572bis: "in dachter eedtkamerken: lerst een mariabelt op panneel…diffigien van wylen jan noirot en synen huysvrouw ende tanneken Noirot…Aeffigien van adrian noirot de voirs. Toebehoirenden…Il tronniyen op panneel…Een gelaesbert met XI gelasen daerop…Een boeren kiermisse by bruegel gemaect…een (singel) tappyt cleecken…eenen schoon cristalleynen spiegel in scrynhout…den winter op doeck by bruegel gemaect…een boeren bruyloft op panneel by bruegel gemaect…een ander bruyloft op doeck oyck by bruegel gemaect." See Goldstien, "Keeping up Appearances" (2003), 44.

convey a message of wealth, connoisseurship and family lineage. It is a presentation for outsiders in the room which, as guests, they would most likely have seen when invited in for a meal.[157] In his discussion of seventeenth-century domestic interiors in Antwerp, Jeffrey Muller explains that the most luxurious displays were reserved for the "back room" and the dining room on the ground floor. These spaces contained the greatest variety and quantity of objects and must have been the centers of social life.[158] If the *Peasant Wedding Banquet* hung in a dining room, where Bruegel's feasting peasants were viewed by educated people who were themselves partaking of a feast, contemporary ideas of conduct and conversation surrounding the feast, or the *convivium* tradition, become important elements for understanding the reception of the painting. Literature from this tradition is helpful particularly when discussing Bruegel's multivalent work since it reveals a process of viewing, reading and talking that engages and analyses art, literature and history on multiple levels of interpretation.

For the wealthy elite who owned Bruegel's paintings, the *convivium* tradition had become a popular model for convivial interaction. Although the dialogues represented in the texts are, for the most part, ideal and fictional, their popularity, especially among humanists, increased their instructional value and they became social standards to be imitated.[159] In the following, I will first briefly discuss two of the most well-known patrons of Bruegel, Jean Noirot and Nicolaes Jongelinck, whose dining rooms were decorated with the artist's paintings and whose high station and elite status in Antwerp society would have insured such a convivial reception of these works. I will then examine some of the convivial literature, specifically the format and style of

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157 Goldstein, "Artifacts of Domestic Life" (1996), 180-181.

158 Jeffrey Muller, "Private Collections in the Spanish Netherlands: Ownership and Display of Paintings in Domestic Interiors," in Peter Sutton (ed.) *The Age of Rubens*, Ghent: Ludion Press (1993), 199.

159 On this note, it is important to emphasize that Bruegel himself, primarily through his connection to Ortelius, has been associated with a number of the most prominent humanists of his time. Stridbeck claims that in Antwerp Bruegel was one of "a circle of political and religious radical humanists" that included Coornhert and Plantin; *Bruegelstudien* (1977), 20, 29. Contributors to Ortelius' album and who have been specifically associated with Bruegel by other scholars include Georg Braun, Dirck Coornhert, Georg Hoefnagel, Frans Hogenberg, Philippe Galle, and Christopher Plantin. Other than correspondence about Bruegel between Ortelius and a few of his acquaintances, there is no evidence these individuals knew Bruegel personally. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that Ortelius' humanist circle also included Benedict Arius (Montanus), John Dee, Lucas De Heere, Charles de l'Ecluse (Clusius), Hubert Goltzius, Justus Lipsius, Philippe Marnix de Sainte-Aldegonde, Gerard Mercator and Frans Sweerts Younger. For an article addressing the lack of historical evidence that Bruegel knew any of these individuals, with the exception of Ortelius, see Perez Zagorin, "Looking for Pieter Bruegel," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 64 (2003), 73-95.

the discussions narrated, in order to highlight the multivalent, analytical atmosphere it would have inspired. It is in this jovial and intellectually open-ended environment, I argue, that Bruegel's pictures became "conversation pieces" and were examined on multiple different levels regarding their artistry, social implications and religious insight.

On February 21, 1565, Jongelinck, a wealthy merchant businessman and government official under Philip II, pledged his art collection to the city of Antwerp to help a colleague pay a debt owed to the city.[160] According to the text of the pledge, Jongelinck owned paintings by contemporary artists such as Floris and Bruegel, and displayed them at *Ter Beke*, his suburban second home. Jongelinck decorated his rooms with cycles on the *Labors of Hercules* and the *Seven Liberal Arts*, both by Floris, along with scenes of the Judgment of Paris, the three cardinal virtues and Bruegel's paintings of the *Series of the Seasons*.[161] Goldstein and Iain Buchanan have argued that Bruegel's *Series of the Seasons* hung in Jongelinck's dining room, based on their subject matter which relates to the production and consumption of food. Goldstein extends this argument by correlating the paintings with suggestions for suburban dining room decorations put forward by Vitruvius and Alberti.[162] Furthermore, Jongelinck's brother, Jacques Jongelinck, was one of the most well-known sculptors of his time and, in May 1572, was appointed sculptor and metal founder to King Phillip II.[163] He assisted in constructing the prestigious tomb of Charles the Bold and created a series of over-life-size mythological figures in bronze for Jongelinck's country house.[164]

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[160] See Jean Denuce, *De Antwerpsche "Konstkamers": inventarissen van kunstverzamelingen te Antwerpen in de 16e en 17e eeuwen*, Amsterdam: De Spieghel (1932), 5.

[161] Goldstein, "Keeping Up Appearances" (2003), 48; see also Iain Buchanan, "The Collection of Niclaes Jongelinck: I. "Bacchus and the Planets" by Jacques Jongelinck," *Burlington Magazine*, vol. 132 (1990), 102-113 and "The Collection of Niclaies Jongelinck: II. The Months by Pieter Bruegel the Elder," *Burlington Magazine*, vol. 132 (1990), 541-550; Carl van de Velde, "Aspeckte der Historienmalerei in Antwerpen" (1992).

[162] Goldstein, "Keeping up Appearances" (2003), 48. Muller also states that in the seventeenth century there was a decorum of subject that called for agreement between the function of a particular room and the kinds of pictures hung in it. Sir Henry Wotton recommended that pictures "bee as properly bestowed for their quality, as fitly for their grace: that is, chearefull Paintings in the Feasting and Banquetting Roomes; Grauer Stories in Galleries, Land-schips and Boscage, and such Wilde workes in open Tarraces, or in Summer houses (as we call them) and the like." Muller, "Private Collections in the Spanish Netherlands" (1993), 199.

[163] Buchanan, "The Collection of Niclaes Jongelinck: I" (1990), 102.

[164] Kavaler, *Parables of Order and Enterprise* (1999), 51.

Noirot's home was located at the Mint, where he was employed until he fled the city in 1572 due to financial trouble. An inventory of his possessions was made upon his declaration of bankruptcy. His art collection was considerable and more or less on par with other Masters of the Mint, as well as that of Jongelinck. Although Jongelinck was never employed by the Mint, Goldstein has shown that he was closely associated with its activities through family connections. Both his father and brother were also local Mint Masters and his younger brother was Warden.[165]

Despite the fact that Jongelinck's personal and professional interactions were more dispersed within noble and humanist circles than those of Noirot, both were businessman who had extensive personal connections to members of the Antwerp Mint, as well as with land speculators and merchants, during the same period and would have on numerous occasions invited these acquaintances into their homes for a dinner party.[166] They belonged to the highest, non-noble social class and the fact that they owned a diverse array of paintings depicting biblical scenes, classical mythology, landscapes and peasant scenes gives some indication to their education and interests.

Through their mutual business interests both men were connected to Joris Veselaer, General of the Mint during the tenure of Noirot, who owned works by Bosch, Joos van Cleve, Jan Gossaert, Pieter Coecke van Aelst, and others. The subjects of the paintings tend toward representations of the antique.[167] I single out Veselaer not only because of his collection, but because in addition to his connection to the Mint, he was well known as an art dealer and collector, negotiating sales of extremely precious objects to international leaders including two French kings and Charles V. [168] As both a high-ranking Mint official and a prominent international art dealer, Veselaer had contact with influential political figures as well as to the period's best-known artists. During the 1560's, Noirot, Veselaer and Jongelinck all had extensive art collections and either had direct or familial connections to the Mint; Veselaer and Noirot lived

[165] Goldstein, "Keeping up Appearances" (2003), 236.
[166] Ibid.
[167] Ibid, 250.
[168] Filip Vermeylen explains that the profession of art dealer was a relatively new phenomenon in sixteenth-century Antwerp; they acted "as a liaison between the artist and an affluent patron, mostly upper nobility if not royalty; these upper-class dealers negotiated the contract for a work of art and communicated the wishes of the patron to the artist." See Vermeylen, "The Antwerp Art Market in the Sixteenth Century," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University (2001), 105.

very near one another and worked together frequently; Jongelinck and Noirot had both acquired paintings by Bruegel and Floris, two of the most popular painters of the time.[169] Such close personal and professional ties between these three men, all with a keen interest in art collection and at least two of whom interacted with artists themselves, provides a sketch of a group of individuals who, although not of noble birth nor educated humanists, had no doubt cultivated both the means and interest to acquire art as well as a sense of taste with which to evaluate it.

By the early sixteenth century, the upper classes began to pattern their activities during mealtime after those that occurred in the dining halls of monasteries or courtly circles. Primarily, it was an occasion not only to eat one's fill but also to express one's thoughts. Since Plato's *Symposium*, the *convivium* had been an established literary genre ideally suited for discussion of a variety of topics. Founded on further descriptions of feasts in classical texts such as Cicero, Macrobius and Plutarch, the nourishment and self-cultivation that took place at dinner parties was provided in equal measure by food, drink and conversation. For example, the Ancients wanted both Bacchus and the Muses to preside at banquets, for "learned and entertaining words…delight the body and mind as much as wine does, or more."[170] Athenaeus constantly plays with the idea that words, not just food, provide the "satisfaction" of the meal: "we brought as our contribution not delicacies, but topics for discussion."[171] Montaigne praises the Greeks and Romans for setting aside "for eating, which is an important action in life, several hours and the better part of the night," because the meal is an opportunity for total pleasure thanks to "such good talk and agreeable entertainment as men of intelligence are able to provide for one another."[172] "*Edere et audire*," to eat and listen; in Erasmus's *Fabulous Feast*, this is the goal of a few friends sitting around a table—to cultivate the mind by taking in stories while nourishing the body with dinner. In the "Sober Feast," when deciding how to properly dedicate the

[169] On the probable personal connection between Noirot and Jongelinck, Goldstein also points out that Noirot's brother-in-law, Robert Eeckeren—who took Noirot in when he became a 'fugitive' in 1572—had his country house just two houses away from Jongelinck; Goldstein, "Keeping up Appearances" (2003), 237.
[170] Jeanneret, *A Feast of Words* (1991), 33
[171] Emily Gowers, *The Loaded Table: Representations of Food in Roman Literature*, Oxford: Clarendon Press (1993), 30.
[172] Gowers, *The Loaded Table* (1993).

garden where their dinner will take place, the character Albert suggests that each one make a contribution of his own. Aemilius questions, "What shall we contribute who've come here empty-handed?" Albert replies, "You who carry such riches in your mind? Let each offer to the company the best thing he's read this week."[173] As we will see, these convivial conversations were spurred on by scripted topics, texts read around the table or paintings hanging on the wall.

By 1582, J.G. Stuckius had compiled much of what the ancients had to say regarding dining in his *Antiquitatum convivialium libri tres*, which became the standard sixteenth-century compilation of lore about ancient dining.[174] The volume is divided into three books, each containing around thirty chapters that address various aspects of dining culture—etiquette, manners, conversation, food, drink, special occasions. The work compiles nearly five hundred Greek, Hebrew, Arab and Latin authors whose works Stuckius claims to have read in order to present an accurate picture of the table manners and eating habits of the Ancient Greeks, Romans, Jews, Egyptians, Persians and others. In the Preface to the reader, Stuckius begins with a profoundly religious criticism of the people of his day for being sumptuous and intemperate, and recalls the punishments of God for these sins. The author goes on to recount an experience several years earlier, when he was complaining about the deplorable state of the world in the company of learned men while dining. The discussion that ensued inspired him to continue his history of convivia in the hope of admonishing readers to change impious habits, especially drunkenness and gluttony.

Since the customs of convivia are relevant to many facets and phases of human life—both private and public, sacred and profane—Stuckius explains that he incorporated information from ethic, economic, political, social and military sources. Thus, he hopes that many disciplines will take profit from his effort. He goes on to emphasize the importance for convivia, since they are not only pleasant and useful but

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[173] Desiderus Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus: Colloquies*, vol. 40, translated and annotated by Craig R. Thompson, Toronto: University of Toronto Press (1997), 926.

[174] J.G. Stuck, *Antiquitatum convivialium libri tres*, Tiguri: Christophorus Froschoverus, 1582. I am grateful to Han Lamers (Leiden University) for his help in translating the Latin text. This volume is the subject of ongoing research and will be the central focus of a separate, forthcoming publication. On the use of this source in contemporary literature, see Robert Cummings, "Liberty and History in Jonson's Invitation to Supper," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, vol. 40, no. 1, The English Renaissance (Winter, 2000), 103-12. See also Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus: Colloquies*, vol. 39 (1997), 802.

absolutely necessary in the establishment and maintenance of friendship and communities. Morever, he says, they were instituted by God. For Ancients, the convivium was sacred because the gods were imagined to be actually present; for Christians, in the beginning in the Garden of Eden, God wished that husband and wife share in a meal. The chapters that follow address topics such as the origin and definition of convivia (literally meaning "living together"), as well as convivia appropriate for kings and emperors, the military and, quite interestingly, artists and workers. "Table talks," according to Stuckius, are the essential ornaments of convivia. It is stressed that the topics are almost infinite and very difficult to pinpoint due to their diversity. However, the conversation should be a balance between serious topics, philosophical and religious, and more light-hearted, jocose fare, such as riddles (*griphi* and *aenigmata*). This way, no matter whether men are discussing scripture or solving a puzzle, the mind is always sharpened.[175]

Although this book was compiled after Bruegel's death and would have been accessible only to the well-educated humanist elite, which patrons like Jean Noirot were not a part of, the book itself and the breadth of its contents nevertheless speak to the availability and demand for the literature that was available on the subject. In addition, Stuck makes clear in his Preface that the content offers instruction to people from all walks of life—royalty, military, artists and workers—for cultivating activities around the dinner table so that sin might be avoided.

As Stuckius emphasizes, a key element that insured that dialogue enhanced the pleasure of the feast, cultivating both body and mind, is diversity, or *varietas*. Variety is consistently quoted in the convivium tradition as a universal law, and is therefore a necessary condition for the success of a meal. The banquets of classical literature, like those of Renaissance literature, cannot be reduced to the thematic, structural or stylistic constraints of a single genre: what makes them distinctive is their variety; they are pluralistic by their very nature.[176] Jumping from cosmology to grammar, mixing bits of metaphysics with fragments of history, as in the texts of Macrobius, is merely to follow the common practice of entertaining and informative conversation during a

[175] J.G. Stuck, *Antiquitatum convivialium libri tres*, 578-580.
[176] Ibid., vol. 39, 130-134.

meal.[177] Ideas flow freely around a given theme and contradictions come out into the open in a collective search for truth, which may or may not be achieved. The pleasure of debate and the stimulation of controversy often even seem to be ends in themselves. Whereas other genres, such as speeches or sermons, systematically attempt to demolish contrary views and to impose a single truth, dialogue increases the number of points of view.[178]

Likewise, for humanists such as Erasmus, medley and mixture are the remedies recommended to diners to prevent the boredom that might result from one-dimensional conversation. In his *Profane Feast*, Erasmus states that, "Though, as the comic poet says, 'There are as many opinions as men,' and 'Every man follows his own bent,' still nobody will convince me there is more variety in men's natures than in their tastes; there's so much that you can hardly find two men who like the same things."[179] In his analysis of Erasmus's *Profane Feast*, Lawerence Ryan explains that in this light, "no single topic becomes for long the focus of attention. The dialogue moves pleasantly from brief explanations of the difference between Stoics and Epicureans, to observations about the wines and viands being served, to why poets are devotees of Bacchus, to the variety of men's preferences in foods, to humorous play upon the word 'gallus,' to Augustinus's 'settling' for his share of the feast by extemporizing amusingly on a number of ways to vary the sentence 'multi mihi constat—it costs me a great deal.'"[180] The role of a multivalent dialogue is so important in the ceremonial of meals that treatises go far beyond general recommendations and provide topics and even ready-made formulae for use in mealtime conversation. Even the treatises themselves become topics of conversation.[181] And this is important for the context of Bruegel's *Peasant Wedding Banquet*: talk about meals can always serve as talk at

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[177] Ibid., 164.
[178] Ibid., 175. See also Michel Jeanneret*, A Feast of Words* (1991). For an analysis of a similar atmosphere of conversation that took place in the tavern during the sixteenth century, especially having to do with theological topics during the Reformation, see Christopher Ocker, "Taverns and the Self at the Dawn of the Reformation," in Reindert Falkenburg, et al (eds.), *Image and Imagination of the Religious Self in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2006. Joel Altman argues that this open-ended approach also characterizes the literature of Tudor playwrites; see *The Tudor Play of Mind: Rhetorical Inquiry and the Development of Elizabethan Drama*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978.
[179] Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus: Colloquies*, vol. 40 (1997), 140.
[180] Lawerence V. Ryan, "Art and Artifice in Erasmus' *Convivium Profanum*," *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 31 (1978), 2.
[181] Ibid.

meals; table talk is inclined to be reflexive, a subject I will discuss in greater detail in Chapter Three.[182]

For the wealthy elite who owned Bruegel's paintings, the writing of Erasmus was of the utmost importance for education, both in academics and etiquette, particularly his *Colloquia familiaria*. Erasmus's *Colloquies* first appeared in print in November of 1518, published under the full title *Familiarum colloquiorum formulae, et alia quaedam per Des. Erasmum Roterodamum*. The publisher, Johann Froben, targeted the brief eighty page booklet at people who wanted to learn to speak Latin quickly.[183] Erasmus was initially annoyed by the publication of the *Familiarum colloquiorum formulae* (it was produced without his permission), mainly because, in its original form, it was a manual directed toward young students and not for public consumption. However, the overwhelming success of the book must have appeased him and spurred him on, because he ended up not only writing a preface for a 1519 reprinting of the book, but intermittently edited and added to it up until 1533.[184] By 1533, at least sixteen editions of the *Colloquia* had been published. Erasmus mentions, for example, that rumors of an impending prohibition due to it being censored by the Sorbonne intensified the desire of the public to buy the *Colloquia* and thus caused the Parisian printer Colineus to bring out a 'huge' edition of the work, purportedly of 24,000 copies, in March of 1527.[185] In a letter from 1529 that discusses this edition, Erasmus boasts, "It was in everybody's hands."[186] It continued to be one of the most popular and frequently reprinted books of the sixteenth century.[187]

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[182] On table talk as it is represented in Renaissance literature, see Jeanneret, *A Feast of Words* (1991), 89-111.

[183] Thompson, *The Colloquies of Erasmus*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press (1965), xxiii. On the *Colloquies,* see also Dennis M. Gilkey, "The *Colloquies* of Erasmus and the Literature of the Renaissance: Drama, Satire and Dialogue," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Colorado, 1983; J. Chomarat, D. Ménager, et al (eds.), *Cinq Banquets*, Paris: J.Vrin, 1981; "Erasme conteur: folklore et invention narrative," in *Mélanges de langue et de literature médiévales offerts á Pierre Le Gentil*, Paris: SEDES (1973), 85-104; Preserved Smith, *A Key to the Colloquies of Erasmus*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927.

[184] Thompson, *The Colloquies of Erasmus* (1965), xxiii.

[185] On Erasmus's response to censorship, see "The Usefulness of the Colloquies," *Collected Works of Erasmus: Colloquies*, vol. 40 (1997), 1096-1117.

[186] Thompson, *The Colloquies of Erasmus* (1965), xxxii.

[187] Ryan, "Art and Artifice" (1978), 16. Starting in Erasmus's own lifetime, numerous individual colloquies were translated into just about every different European vernacular, including even one into Old Irish. Both in the original Latin texts and through the various sixteenth- and seventeenth-century translations, Erasmus' *Colloquies* had a widespread influence on many later Renaissance writers. Among Erasmus' literary works only the *Praise of Folly* has enjoyed greater fame. Romuald I. Lakowski,

The collection of *formulae* contained various ways of greeting people with differing levels of formality; ways of wishing people well in various situations; phrases for how to take leave of people, how to inquire after people's health and so on. Perhaps the biggest change the *Formulae* underwent on its journey towards what we now know as the *Colloquia familiaria* is the addition of long, fully-developed dialogues, the first of which appeared in the March 1522 edition. In fact, no new *formulae* were included after 1522.[188] Craig Thompson writes that Erasmus probably realized the potential for the dialogue form as a medium for him to write more or less freely on a wide variety of topics that interested him.[189] Indeed, the new subtitle (*Concerning Men, Manners, and Things*) and the introduction to the dialogues transformed Erasmus's work from a phrasebook to a source of coherent compositions on a variety of sacred and profane topics, often intermixing the two, that could be used as models not only for spoken and written Latin, appealing to schoolboys as well as serious Latin students of all ages, but also for proper behaviour in various everyday situations.[190] Incorporated into this expanded collection are six *convivia* centered on conversations which take place around dinner time. These include: *Convivium profanum* (Profane Feast)*, Convivium religiosum* (Godly Feast)*, Convivium poeticum* (Poetic Feast)*, Convivium fabulosum* (Fabulous Feast)*, Polydaitia (Dispar convivium /* Unequal Feast*)* and *Nēphalion Symposion* (Sober Feast). Though his first *convivium*, the "Profane Feast," followed in the tradition of the earlier *Colloquia*, containing primarily formulae for correct Latin speaking, it was later expanded in order to, along with the five subsequent *convivia*, represent a more ideal dialogue, while at the same time maintaining a prescriptive tone for social manners surrounding the meal.[191] Because Erasmus's discussion of prevalent notions of food, drink and entertainment furnishes us with clues to standards

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"Review of *Erasmus of the Low Countries* and Desiderius Erasmus: *Colloquies*," *Early Modern Literary Studies*, vol. 4.1 (May 1998), 11.1-10.

[188] Thompson, *The Colloquies of Erasmus* (1965), xxv.

[189] Ibid., xxxi.

[190] Ibid., xxv.

[191] For a detailed description on the actual changes that occurred in the various editions of the *Colloquia* and why, see Ryan, "Art and Artifice" (1978). According to Thompson, Erasmus' own correspondence offers anecdotal information on dinner parties he attended, including his food, company and conversation preferences. Goldstein, "Artifacts of Domestic Life" (1996), n. 47.

of taste and decorum in a particular society, we can learn something about sixteenth-century life and manners from his brief dialogues.[192]

These individual colloquies are a revival of an ancient literary type, which I have already briefly discussed as being widely esteemed and practiced during the Renaissance. Following in the footsteps of the classical past, Erasmus describes eating and drinking moderately at table, as well as the time immediately before and after a meal, as the ideal setting for the cultivation of the self through participation in profitable discourse on a number of different subjects, from literature and art to politics and games, and incorporating philology, morality, and spirituality. These occasions were filled with serious discussion mixed with lighthearted comedy. As the character Levinus notes in concluding the *Fabulous Feast*, "Nothing is more fun than treating jokes seriously."[193] This short statement is a poignant example of the analytical nature of these conversations; nothing was excluded from being intricately analyzed and discussed, even a simple joke. The character Augustinus illustrates this imperative in the *Profane Feast* by dissecting and teaching the rules of grammar after dinner through witty dialogues, each of them a miniature scene from everyday life.

In the "Poetic Feast," Erasmus asserts, "I show what sort of feast scholars should have."[194] Whether this literary party ever took place is uncertain, but Thompson argues that we may suppose that it resembles, more or less, many a one Erasmus enjoyed.[195] The house and gardens, as well as some of the dialogues, so vividly described in Erasmus's "Godly Feast" were probably fictional constructions based on, at least in part, actual experiences in the homes of friends and acquaintances. For example, explains Thompson, in some respects the description of the interior of Eusebius's house, which is the setting for the feast, resembles that of Erasmus's friend Johann von Botzheim, Canon of Constance, where Erasmus was guest in September 1522. Likewise, the mansion of Jérôme de Busleyden in Mechelen may have contributed something to Eusebius's villa. Other country houses in which Erasmus stayed that could have been influential were in Anderlec, near Brussels, and 'zum

[192] Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 40 (1997), 802.
[193] Lawerence V. Ryan, "Erasmi Convivia: The Banquet Colloquies of Erasmus," *Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Turonensis*, Paris: Vrin (1980), 305.
[194] Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 40 (1997), 1102.
[195] Ibid., vol. 39, 390.

Sessel' in Basel.[196] Preserved Smith also argues that the majority of the anecdotes included in the *Colloquies* are founded on the personal experiences of Erasmus and his friends, comparing them even to Luther's "Table Talk" and "Goethe's Conversations with Ackermann."[197]

While enjoying a simple meal of produce from the garden, along with "thick" wine from the "fount of the muses," the guests in the "Poetic Feast" engage in conversation addressing enigmatic verses from classical literature, conflicting interpretations and philological studies. Responding to their intellectual endeavors, Margaret, the maidservant who intermittently offers comic relief to the scene, charges, "That's poets for you! The minute dinner starts, they count on their fingers (measuring meter and rhyme) and bring out a book. Better save games and literature for the second course."[198] When one of the guests returns empty-handed after a trip to the kitchen to request from Margaret salt to "make the eggs palatable," Sbrulius consoles his friends, "At least we'll season our eggs with stories."[199] The *Poetic Feast*, as well as many other convivia of Erasmus, also shows that convivial conversation was not exclusively reserved for the dining room but took place in other receiving rooms of the house, as well as in the garden. Later, after being told by Margaret that their "session" has lasted long enough, they retreat to the backyard in order to stretch their legs, pick some fruit for dessert and continue their conversation: "suppose we sit under this lime tree and invoke the Muses…the very garden itself will furnish a subject [of discussion]."[200] The feast concludes with the guests competing in a game to see who can produce the best poetic verse inspired by the blooms of the garden. This is one more illustration of the way in which analytical thinking and creative effort were carried out in a competitive atmosphere among friends.

The most visually inspired of the *Colloquies* is the *Godly Feast*, a dialogue written, according to Erasmus, to "give ample demonstration of what the feasting of all Christians should be like."[201] The conversation begins with the host character Eusebius guiding his guests through his gardens just prior to lunch, pointing out certain

[196] Ibid., 172.
[197] Preserved Smith, *A Key to the Colloquies of Erasmus* (1927), 1-3.
[198] Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 39 (1997), 396.
[199] Ibid., 397.
[200] Ibid., 404.
[201] Ibid., vol. 40, 1101.

art works, plants and a collection of birds, in order to show how nature, art and religion work in harmony to shape a person's moral, aesthetic and spiritual well-being.[202] For example, Eusebius explains that a fountain appears as a symbol of spiritual thirst, whereas a stream, polluted by kitchen waste, warns of the dangers of corrupting the pure source of Scripture.[203] An owl perched in a painted grove reminds one to be prudent and act advisedly. In addition to religious and moral instruction, Erasmus offers through the speech of Eusebius some indication that art, even artists, were also topics of discussion. Drawing attention to a mural, his painted garden within a garden, Eusebius states that, "We are twice pleased when we see a painted flower competing with a real one. In one we admire the cleverness of nature, in the other the inventiveness of the painter."[204] In the original Latin edition, Erasmus uses the term *ingenium* for "inventiveness." As I have explained earlier in Chapter One, the word *ingenium* refers to much more than just rote imitation of nature, but is indicative more of the artist's natural-born imagination and creativity. Thus, the double admiration referred to regards both the created products of nature and the artist, as well as the creative abilities of the two. Eusebius's statement indicates that the imaginative talent of the artist is as much a subject of delight and discourse as the beauty or decoration of the picture he creates.

The second section of the *Godly Feast* consists of the lunch-party itself, and the discussion of biblical texts and moral themes which takes place during it. Sitting down to eat, Eusebius explains that, "truly if a meal was something holy to pagans, much more should it be so to Christians, for whom it's an allegory of that sacred last supper which the Lord Jesus took with his disciples."[205] These occasions at mealtime provided inspiration for laughing, learning and religious insight. Meandering between one subject and another, from lofty discourse to table talk in a lighter vein, various

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[202] Ibid. For a detailed study of this particular convivium, see Lucy L.E. Schlüter, *Niet alleen: Een kunsthistorisch-ethische plaatsbepaling van tuin en huis in het* Convivium religiosum *van Erasmus,* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995; Jochen Becker, "'Non est muta rerum natura': die anschauliche Sittenlehre van Erasmus *Convivium religiosum*," in Carsten-Peter Warncke (ed.) *Ikonographie der Bibliotheken, Vorträge eines bibliotheks-historischen Seminars vom 13. bis 14. September in der Herzog August Bibliothek*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz (1992), 43-106. See also Florence Hopper, "The Erasmian Garden," *The Oxford Companion to Gardens*, Oxford (1986), 390-391.
[203] Terence Cave, *The Cornucopian Text: Problems of Writing in the French Renaissance*, Oxford: Clarendon Press (1979), 104.
[204] Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 39 (1997), 179.
[205] Ibid., 182.

styles and rhetorical witticisms were incorporated into the conversation, requiring the participant to digest his or her food with moderation so as to maintain the clearest mind possible. Although Erasmus's *convivia* are obviously representative of his own thoughts and ideas, each having their own persuasive agenda, an open-ended dialogue characterizes each. Even when discussing scripture in the *Godly Feast*, an occasion in which a more dogmatic attitude might be expected, the dialogue entertains multiple different interpretations. After the first scripture verse has been read during dinner, Eusebius says, "Nevertheless I should be better pleased if I understood thoroughly what I heard. I wish we had a good theologian here who not only understood these matters but had prudence as well. I don't know that it's permissible for us laymen to discuss these topics." Timothy responds, "It would be permissible even for sailors, in my opinion, provided there is no rash attempt at formal definition."[206] During their discourse on the interpretation of three different verses dealing with the true nature of Christian liberty, even mistakes and differences of opinion are seen as opportunities to find better answers. When asked to join the group in offering an interpretation of Proverbs 21: 1-3, which was previously read aloud at the table, Theophilus timidly defers, saying his mind had been on the food rather than the conversation. Eusebius responds, "You'll please us even by making a mistake, for thus you'll give us opportunity of finding the answer." After exchanging complimentary, but differing, interpretations on the meaning of the verses, the group concludes that though none of them can claim full or final certitude, they believe they achieve glimpses of truth, or at least, consensus about probabilities.[207] The purpose of the conversation and offering one's interpretation was not about being right or wrong; it seems, on the contrary, that this had little value. Rather, judgment about one's particular view was based on how well the person argues his point and inspires further conversation and opportunity for learning.

In fact, judgments about quality, defining what is good and bad, are equally ambiguous. In the "Fabulous Feast," Eutrapelus decrees that a contest of story-telling will take place and "only amusing stories shall be presented…Even stories made up on the spur of the moment shall be lawful, provided probability and decorum are

[206] Ibid., 187.
[207] Ibid., 187, 174.

observed. If everyone has a story, the most entertaining tale and the one who tells the dullest shall pay for the wine." Surprised by this, Asteus objects saying, "But your law makes the best story equal to the worst." Eutrapelus responds with a clever justification: "Where pleasure is the object, the worst speaker deserves praise no less than the best, because he is no less entertaining…Don't more people laugh at a cuckoo's song than at a nightingale's? In this matter, mediocrity is no recommendation."[208] After multiple stories involving deceit, irony, judgment, wittiness and social manners, Adolesches tells the final tale, then concludes: "We've all had our story. Now, it remains for the judge to give his decision."[209] Just at this moment, Levinus, an unexpected guest, arrives on the scene and issues an invitation for all those present to attend a theological luncheon the following day. The guests' attention is diverted and the dialogue concludes with no final judgment about the winner of the competition. When conversation and entertainment are the priorities of the party, right and wrong or good and bad are means to an end rather than ends in themselves.

In the *Godly Feast*, the paintings on the walls surrounding the event were not neglected. In fact, they played an integral role. In describing his dining room to his guests, Eusebius explains in the *Godly Feast*, "I seem to eat in a garden, not a house, for the walls also have their own flourishing flowers scattered over them; and there are good paintings. Here Christ keeps the Last Supper with his chosen disciples. Here Herod celebrates his birthday with a fatal feast. Here Dives of the Gospel story, shortly to go down to hell, dines sumptuously; Lazarus, soon to be received into Abraham's bosom, is driven from the gates."[210] The images described all reflect the room's function, each showing events centered around the meal. Eusebius adds an overtly moralized explanation for them, saying that the images "warn us to be temperate at feasts and deter us from drunkenness and sensuality."[211] Not only do the

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[208] Ibid., 574.
[209] Ibid., 584.
[210] Ibid., 205. For a discussion of the themes of these pictures in the context of dining rooms, see Schlüter, *Niet Alleen* (1995), 222-238.
[211] Ibid. On Erasmus and the visual arts, see, M.A. Nauwelaerts, "Erasmus en de kunst," *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Oudheidkunde en Kunstgeschiedenis,* vol. 42 (1975), 3-30; Erwin Panofsky, "Erasmus and the Visual Arts," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, vol. 32 (1969), 200-217; C.C. de Bruin, "Erasmus in de Spiegel der zestiende-eeuwse letterkunde en beeldende kunsten," *Nederlands Literatuurboek,* Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1969; Georges Marlier, *Erasme et la peinture flamande de son*

paintings provide some sense of the host's taste and values to his guests, they also universalize the ritual of the meal by coupling the actual event with some of the most famous meals in history.[212] The paintings, as much as the conversation, offer the viewers opportunities for self-cultivation.

Regarding the *Godly Feast*, Terence Cave writes that Erasmus has constructed a scene in which a frugally domesticated nature penetrates the religious colloquy in the most literal sense: remarks about various plants in the garden, sculpture, painting, food and drink are juxtaposed with comments on scriptural meaning in such a way that a continuity and even an equivalence is established between them. The surroundings of the guests, as well as the food and drink they consume, are integral, even inspirational, to the discussion; evangelical points are constantly being made through metaphors of viewing and tasting. This is an important point because Cave argues that in the text the decor and the banquet reflect one another, establishing an equilibrium (or reversible transference) between art and nature, body and soul, human and divine. Sacred and profane are imbricated so that there is no longer a clear distinction between the two.[213] Cave explains that:

> Ambivalence is manifested. Sometimes the surface becomes transparent and reveals a hidden meaning (as with the fountain and polluted stream); other times, what is seen, for example in the gardens, is not explained. Literal seeing has to suffice, and the host comments that, for the moment it will be enough to have seen these emblems as if through a lattice. Such a remark recalls the Pauline notion of seeing through a glass darkly. But within the thematic structure of the *Convivium religiosum*, the figure of the lattice has a special suggestiveness. For the house and the gardens constitute a place where, as the guests walk, perspectives are constantly shifting; there are gateways, courtyards, gardens within gardens, galleries, layer upon layer of moving surfaces endlessly pointing towards new and unexpected significations. In the concluding section, the host refers to the

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temps, Damme: Éditions du Musée van Maerlant, 1954; Rachel Giese, "Erasmus and the fine Arts," *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 7 (1935), 257-279. See also J.B. Trapp, "Thomas More and the Visual Arts," *Essays on the Renaissance and the Classical Tradition*, Aldershot: Variorum (1990), VIII, 27-54; Warren W. Wooden and John N. Wall, Jr., "Thomas More and the painter's eye: visual perspective and artistic purpose in More's *Utopia*," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, vol. 15 (1985), 231-263.

[212] Goldstein, "Keeping Up Appearances" (2003), 183.

[213] Cave, *The Cornucopian Text* (1979), 105. On the interplay of art and nature, literal and metaphorical understanding, intimation and actuality in the *Godly Feast*, see T. Cave, "*Enargeia*: Erasmus and the Rhetoric of Presence in the Sixteenth Century," *L'esprit créateur*, vol. 16 (Winter 1976), 5-19.

> opening and shutting of windows in different seasons so as to create differing views, different spaces and places.[214]

To conclude, it is this early modern atmosphere of dialogue and analytical inquiry in which pictures throughout the domestic interior could have functioned as "conversation pieces," eliciting discussion on a number of different levels. Eusebius, in the *Godly Feast*, illustrates that art was enjoyed in a purely decorative sense, enhancing the pleasurable nature of dining room entertainment: "I seem to eat in a garden, not a house." However, considering the multivalent nature of the discussions described in Erasmus's *Convivia*, among many others, analyzing art and literature in terms of form, content and function, there is no reason to assume a one-dimensional approach to viewing. Pleasure and didacticism, especially regarding one's view of the world or proper social manners are not mutually exclusive, as Eusebius's explanation of the paintings hanging on his dining room wall indicate: "they warn us to be temperate at feasts and deter us from drunkenness and sensuality."

Nor, as illustrated in Eusebius's tour of the grounds, are the sacred and profane exclusive of one another; a fountain appears as a symbol of spiritual thirst, whereas a stream, polluted by kitchen waste, warns of the dangers of corrupting the pure source of Scripture. Furthermore, the artfulness of pictures, not only *what* they represent but also *how* they represent could have also been a topic of conversation. For example, in the *Profane Feast* we are told that Augustinus appreciates witty dialogues both for what they have to say and for how they say it; he dissects and teaches his guests the rules of grammar after dinner using the dialogues read at table, each of them a miniature scene from everyday life. The companions in the *Poetic Feast* recite poetry, analyze difficult terms, resolve problems of rhyme and meter and give more in-depth readings of traditional manuscripts. Nothing is excluded from their analytical minds; what they view while in the garden eating dessert inspires them to create their own poetic verse. In the *Godly Feast*, Eusebius admires the *ingenium* of the artist through a comparison of painted and natural flowers. Likewise, in a time when discussion about art *per se* was becoming a more popular topic among Northern art lovers, as is attested in the writing of, among others, Lambert Lombard, Dominicus Lampsonius, Lucas de

[214] Ibid., 103-111.

Heere and Abraham Ortelius, close analysis of the grammar of visual art, regarding both form and content, could have been a topic of conversation as much as aesthetic pleasure and religious or moral instruction. This atmosphere also provides the context in which to understand Bruegel's later works of peasants as I will describe them in the following chapter—multivalent and hybrid pictures that, through their mediation of visual concepts and pictorial elements associated with history painting (as well as some of the themes themselves), beg for close visual analysis and raise questions about issues that were prominent in intellectual discussions of the time, such as art and nature, antique and modern, sacred and profane and vernacular cultivation.

Chapter Three:

"Feast your eyes, Feast your mind": Bruegel's later Peasant Paintings

Take heart…do your best, that we may reach our target:
that they (Italians) may no longer say in their speech that
Flemish painters can make no figures.

-Karel van Mander, *Den Grondt der Edel Vry Schilder-const*[215]

[I]n this mortal life, wandering from God, if we wish to return to our native country where we can be blessed we should use this world and not enjoy it, so that the "invisible things" of God "being understood by the things that are made" may be seen, that is, that by means of corporal and temporal things we may comprehend the eternal and spiritual.

-St. Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*

I.

In the following, I examine three paintings by Bruegel made in the last years of his life,1568-1569, all of which are now in Vienna: *Peasant Wedding Banquet*, *Peasant Dance*, and *Peasant and Nest Robber*. Comparable to the way in which members of the Pléiade program or rederijkers, such as Jan van der Noot and Lucas de Heere, advocated the cultivation of the vernacular language by incorporating the style and form of Latin, French or Italian literature, as well as translating texts from classical Antiquity, I show how Bruegel's monumental paintings of peasants reveal a similar agenda for what I have termed a "visual vernacular." Rather than this mode of painting being dependent on the resolute imitation of nature, rejecting any idealization of figures, I will show how Bruegel advocates for the incorporation of classicist, Italianate visual concepts and pictorial elements into detailed images of local custom. In this way, Bruegel mediates characteristics of ambitious *historiae* for peasant paintings, an idiom increasingly recognized as Northern, and asserts his style to be just as capable of copious, apt and cultivated expression. Furthermore, I intend to show how the recognition of this artistic mediation—in which the viewer is often forced to negotiate between sacred and profane, antique and modern, Northern and Italian

[215] Karel van Mander, *The Foundation of Noble Free Art of Painting*, unpublished translation, Elizabeth Honig (ed.), trans. by J. Bloom, et al., 13.

artistic practices—challenges the interpretive capabilities of the viewer and creates thematic associations between referee and referent that would have inspired the kind of lively conversation that fit well within the analytical model of viewing and discussing art and literature illustrated in the dialogues representing the *convivium* tradition. These paintings, which probably hung originally in dining rooms, studies or social rooms, functioned as "conversation pieces," eliciting questions and conversations on a number of different topics regarding both the form and content of the pictures. In so doing, Bruegel's practice of mediation functions not only to further cultivate his artistic style, but also to cultivate the mind of the viewer.

As with Aertsen's *Pancake Eaters* discussed in the Introduction, Bruegel's *Peasant Wedding Banquet* (fig. 8) is both a detailed depiction of a Brabant village feast yet is portrayed in such a way that it differs from previous practices of representing peasants.[216] A rustic barn filled with hay from the recent harvest serves as the banquet hall. Multiple figures dressed in traditional peasant attire sit on benches lining a long, diagonally composed table.[217] On the right, bowls of what may be *rijstpap*, or pudding, are served from a door taken off its hinges while, on the left, a man is busy pouring beer.[218] The thoughtful bride is in the center, denoted by a green cloth of honor hanging from a rope attached to a pitchfork stuck in the hay. To the right, crossed sheaves hang from a rake also stuck in the wall of hay. Traditionally, the sheaves would have been the last to be cut from the harvest and were displayed not only in honor of the bounty, with hopes for the same result the following season, but also to symbolize the desire for an equally fertile bride.[219] In the left background, a cluster of peasant figures block any visual exit, crowding into the room in hopes of tasting the banquet victuals. This cluster of heads is compositionally echoed in the left foreground by the multiple empty, round beer mugs piled on top of one another in a basket located next to the beer pourer.

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[216] For analyses of this painting, see Gibson, *Pieter Bruegel* (1991), Sullivan, *Bruegel's Peasants* (1994), and Kavaler, *Parables of Order and Enterprise* (1999), 149-183.
[217] On sixteenth-century costume, see Kavaler, *Parables of Order and Enterprise* (1999), 162-182.
[218] Jan Grauls, *Volkstaal en volksleven in het werk van Pieter Bruegel*, Antwerp: Standaard-boekhandel (1957), 209-210.
[219] On the symbolism of the ritual of the "last sheaves," see Albert Eskeröd, *Arets Fester*, Stockholm: L.T.S. Förlag (1965), 361-364; J.G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: Part V—Spirits of the Corn and of the Wild*, vol. 1, London: Macmillan & Co. (1912), 131-170.

The peasant figures themselves are coarse and display manners appropriate to their social status.[220] To the left of the most prominently and centrally located server, who is dressed in blue with a red hat, a seated man is depicted leaning back, beer jug in hand, looking upwards in the direction of the crossed sheaves. His mouth is open with his teeth revealed, an unrefined characteristic unthinkable in depictions of middle and upper class society.[221] His gaze is wide-eyed, yet seems to be directed at nothing in particular. Beyond him, on the opposite side of the table, five figures, two women and three men, sit beside one another. However, none of them interact with anyone, at least no one that we can see. A woman extends her hand to accept a jug of beer from her companion, but her friend's face is completely obstructed from view by the serving attendant. To the left of this, a peasant man holds a plate so as to reveal its emptiness while he spoons the last bits of its contents into his mouth. His wide-eyed stare is as empty as that of the man across the table toward whom his gaze is directed. Continuing to the left, we see a figure who has completely turned toward his friend, presumably to engage in conversation, but he receives no reciprocal interaction. Similar to the second figure described, the fourth character holds a bowl with her left hand and spoons its contents with her right. Her gaze is directed downward toward the table. The fifth person is hardly discernable, partially covered by the upturned beer jug raised to his mouth and partially by the bagpiper in front of the table. The disconnection between these individuals becomes even more marked when compared to the monk and urbanite on the right side of the painting. The monk's gesture of speech and the man's thoughtful expression and folded hands communicate that the two are deep in discussion. Whereas the primary concern of the peasant figures is the food and drink before them, at the expense of social interaction, the "outsiders"—lord of the manor and religious representative—are portrayed in such a way that it is clear that they are more interested in cultivating their minds than indulging in the pleasures of the feast.

Considering the fact that Bruegel's wealthy, middle-class viewers were most likely themselves partaking of a feast, this contrast between cultivated and uncultivated social manners would have certainly inspired discussion on the subject in front of the

[220] On the peasants' coarse facial features, see Sullivan, *Bruegel's Peasants* (1994), 77-90.
[221] Kavaler, *Parables of Order and Enterprise* (1999), 161.

painting. In fact, as we have seen in the *convivium* literature, and as is illustrated by the monk and gentleman, good conversation often replaces food as the "main course" of the meal. In the "Godly Feast," Timothy starts off by saying, "We'll eat with pleasure but listen with even more pleasure."[222] In descriptions filling the correspondence of Erasmus and his companions, exchanges taking place over meals seem to be as sustaining as the meal itself, and food is constantly employed as a metaphor for intellectual sustenance.[223] "Your book, you see, is meat and drink to me," wrote Johann Reuchlin to Erasmus.[224] Referring to the *Praise of Folly*, Paul Volz recounts that he and some friends "have been reading this…at dinner, and we have been filled with laughter and admiration; indeed it has almost taken the place of meat and drink."[225] In a letter to Guillaume Budé, Erasmus recounts that he and Cuthbert Tunstall "often relax over one of your letters by way of dessert."[226] Such a practice for mealtime had become a part of everyday life. Humanists argued that dialogue takes the pleasure of dining out of the realm of pure sensation and allows reason to play a role.[227]

The string of disconnected peasants culminates in the bagpiper. Clothed in white stockings, white pants, white undershirt and red jacket, the musician stands just left of center with a bagpipe between his arms and his fingers placed over the holes of the chanter. He has a bemused facial expression with dazed eyes and an empty glare. His glare attracts attention to his appearance, over his musical task, and encourages the viewer to look away to find the object of his gaze. Most art historians agree that it is the food being distributed that seduces his interest.[228] As Kavaler explains, "The delinquent village musician is a pointer that asserts the relevance of the food for the half of the picture where it is less [visually] apparent, a relationship strengthened through correspondences in color. He is a sign of elemental desire, of essential and recognizable humanity that is deliberately associated with the wish to join in the

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[222] Thompson, *The Colloquies of Erasmus* (1965), 183.
[223] Goldstein, "Keeping Up Appearances" (2003), 28.
[224] Desiderius Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus*, Wallace K. Ferguson (ed.), trans. by R.A.B. Mynors and D.F.S. Thomson, Toronto: University of Toronto Press (1975), vol. 3, 300.
[225] Ibid., 189.
[226] Ibid., vol. 4, 103.
[227] Jeanneret*, A Feast of Words* (1991), 172-191.
[228] Kavaler, *Parables of Order and Enterprise* (1991), 158.

communal meal."[229] A similar motif can be found in Pieter Aertsen's depiction of the *Egg Dance* (1557, fig. 30). While a man performs the folk dance, the bagpiper in the background has ceased playing music and gestures longingly toward a beer mug held high by the man in the left foreground. In Bruegel's painting, this figure echoes the behavior of the peasants seated at the table; as they are more concerned with nourishing their bodies with the food and drink before them—rather than cultivating their minds with the primary activity at mealtime, conversation—he too has abandoned his principal task, playing music, because of his preoccupation with the banquet feast. On one level, these representations of local peasant custom, viewed in the home of a wealthy businessman, could have inspired discussion about certain social differences, especially priorities regarding mealtime activities.

It should be noted that we know through infrared photography that the bagpiper is depicted, in the original version of the painting, with a large codpiece (fig. 31). It is probable that it was subsequently painted out sometime after 1622, which we can speculate because it was in this year that Pieter Bruegel the Younger copied his father's painting and the codpiece is present.[230] The codpiece becomes a popular element of male attire among all classes around 1450—from peasants and soldiers to kings and emperors—and famous contemporary writers, such Montaigne and Rabelais, often ridiculed it as a wardrobe decoration.[231] Whether or not such a common characteristic of male costume would have indicated, as many modern scholars have argued, that Bruegel's peasants were meant as embodiments of lust and other vices, remains ambiguous at best.

An additional painted-out motif raises more profound issues of modification. The angle of the bagpiper's drone, as well as that of his accompanying musician, is compositionally continued by the ladder leaning on the other side of the hay in the background. This construction would have guided the viewer's gaze upward to what was, either in an unfinished or original version of the painting, a peasant couple making out in the hay (fig. 32). Again, through infrared photography the presence of

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[229] Ibid.
[230] On Pieter Breugel the Younger's practice of copying his father's works, see the exhibition catalogue *Brueghel – Brueghel: Een Vlaamse schildersfamilie rond 1600*, Antwerpen: Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, 1998.
[231] Gibson, *Pieter Bruegel and the Art of Laughter*, Berkeley: University of California Press (2006), 99-100. See also Alpers, "Bruegel's Festive Peasants (1972-3), 167.

the kissing couple is clear. However, it is likely that this scene of sexual desire was painted over either by Bruegel himself or by someone else soon after it was finished. It is not present in his son's copy of the painting just fifty years later and a preliminary paint analysis under magnification indicates that the paint used is consistent with the rest of the painting in this area.[232] This is a strong indication that the most extreme, overt illustration of the lack of self-control in the picture was removed, whether by Bruegel or at the patron's request, while more subtle illustrations of unrefined peasant behavior are kept. Because the drones and ladder compositionally lead the viewer to this space, yet what is supposed to be seen is removed, we know that the change has nothing to do with fine-tuning so that the painting works better artistically. Rather, the couple is removed because of their behavior. This change is an indication of an interest, whether on the part of the artist's or the patron's, in moderating the behavior of the scene, to present a more balanced or subtle representation of peasants in their natural environment. What unrefined behavior remains in the picture has more to do with the pleasure of the meal, lightheartedness as Erasmus would say, rather than any moral or negative connotations that the kissing couple in the hay would have inspired. This lightheartedness, combined with the seriousness represented by the monk and urbanite, visually illustrates Erasmus's instructions for balance, or variety, regarding topics of conversation during dinner parties, from comedy to topics of more sober concern.[233] In the following, I will show how this behavioral moderation is combined with artistic innovation in order to create balance, not only in regard to peasant custom but also in terms of the painting itself.

If compared to previous practices of depicting peasant festivities, the complexity, order and detail of Bruegel's painting distinguishes itself from the rest. The chaotic scene which previously had appeared in German prints and the Verbeeck family water-color paintings as an animated brawl or bacchanal of foolery, such as the *Burlesque Feast* (1550, fig. 33) of Jan Mandijn (1500-1560), is in Bruegel's image composed in a more orderly fashion. Not only is the strong diagonal composition of a table employed to create depth within a closed scene, an addendum to the table is

[232] Information provided by Dr. Elke Oberthaler, Chief Restorer at the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.
[233] L. Ryan, "Erasmi Convivia: The Banquet Colloquies of Erasmus" (1980), 305.

provided in the form of the makeshift serving tray bearing multiple bowls of food which has a similar diagonal composition and is situated as a mediation point between the viewer and the feasting guests. As Kavaler explains, the appeal to the viewer's senses in this way has a long tradition in Netherlandish painting. In the later fifteenth and early sixteenth century, the portrayal of fruit or flowers in devotional images was commonly used to prick senses other than sight, such as smell and taste, to enhance the viewing experience, as well as to engender a pious attitude through religious metaphors of consumption, as illustrated in the Song of Songs.[234] If the intellectually engaged monk and lord emphasize the role of conversation during mealtime and the peasants highlight a desire for pleasure, then this prominent display of food that introduces the viewer to the banquet pricks the most prominent sense for a meal, taste.

In his representation of a *Peasant Feast* (1550, fig. 34), Aertsen also foregrounds the table on which the food is displayed. In order to intensify the visual invitation to participate in the meal, the artist tilts the tabletop forward so that the victuals are more prominently displayed (and viewed). In fact, on the foremost edge of the table, a large loaf of bread is situated so that its shadow extends into the space of the viewer. Furthermore, the bottom portion of the table is cut off by the frame of the painting so that the viewer feels as if he is actually himself sitting at the table and witnessing firsthand the activities of a peasant feast; thus, the picture implicates both the viewer's sense of space and taste.

In Bruegel's painting, the visual invitation to "take a seat" is extended by the strong diagonal movement of the door which leads to the right corner of the painting, where an empty chair is depicted along with two equally empty plates. One plate rests on top of the chair and another larger plate leans against the chair's leg, as if to provide space for the viewer to sit, have some food and contemplate the scene. This motif functions to more intensely emphasize for the viewer the act of observation and that it should not be considered a cursory or impersonal affair. The detail advocating the viewer's participation in the meal might also serve as evidence for the veracity of a well-known anecdote about Bruegel written by Karel van Mander in his *Schilderboeck*:

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[234] See Kavaler, *Parables of Order and Enterprise* (1991), 152; Reindert Falkenburg, *The Fruit of Devotion: Mysticism and the Imagery of Love in Flemish Paintings of the Virgin and Child, 1450-1550*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 1994.

"Bruegel often went outside among the peasants at their kermissen and weddings, dressed in peasant clothing, and gave gifts like the other guests, pretending to be of the bride's or the groom's family or people."[235]

Though Bruegel uses this marginal motif in other paintings, it is no invention of his own. Artists such as Petrus Christus (1410-1473), among many others, paint a similar chair in the foreground scene of *Death of the Virgin* (fig. 35). Bruegel follows such a device in his own painting of the Virgin's death, where an empty chair sits in the foreground with a book resting on top (fig. 36). This acts as a *repoussoir* device that leads the viewer into a painting where the depth is closed off. It also serves as somewhat of an obstruction that once acknowledged, must be assimilated before proceeding further. In the *Peasant Wedding Banquet*, after a brief moment's delay at the *repoussoir*, the viewer is immediately directed by the arms of the central server toward the key figure of the representation and explores the rest of the painting thereafter. These pictorial invitations in the foreground for the beholder to enter the picture and leisurely view the activities are important observations in the context of a possible *convivium* environment, a setting in which viewers in a dining room are themselves lingering at table and participating in a feast, eager to find interesting topics of conversation.[236] Because they themselves reproduce the fundamental activity of the painting—eating—the space and actions of the viewer are immediately implicated, inspiring conversation that is reflexive. Talk about the peasants feasting and the fictive space they occupy inevitably inspires talk about similar activities in the space in front of the painting and what the relationship between the two might be.

In contrast to his earlier panoramic drawings of peasant festivities, such as his depictions of *kermissen,* the importance of monumental figures in the *Peasant*

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[235] "[Met desen Franckert] ging Brueghel dickwils buyten by den Boeren, ter kermis, en ter Bruyloft, vercleedt in Boeren cleeren, en gaven giften als ander, versierende van Bruydts oft Bruydgoms bestandt oft volck te wesen." English translation by Mark Meadow, *Netherlandish Proverbs* (2002), 121.

[236] An interesting literary comparison to this introductory visual invitation for participation is the way in which Rabelais employs the prologues in his Pantagruel and Gargantua as an opportunity for the narrator and the narratee to act out the ideal relationship between the author and reader. Michel Jeanneret explains that in each prologue an imaginary setting is provided for the production and reception of the text, a contract between the author and the reader is drawn up and the tone is set: the story can only begin after this preliminary program and this meeting of the partners in the exchange. In this very structure of narrative communication, the paradigm of the banquet enters the picture: as soon as he opens the book, the reader is invited to eat and drink. To enter the world of the fiction, the rite of passage is a simulation of conviviality; see Jeanneret, *A Feast of Words* (1991), 119.

Wedding Banquet is emphasized by their disposition across the picture plane and the space they occupy, which is closer to and level with that of the viewer. In addition, they are placed in meaningful relation to one another through gestures, movement and expressions, without ever losing sight of the composition as a whole, in order to structure the narrative portrayed—visual concepts that also defined a painted *historia*. In particular, the complex assembly of arms and overlapping legs that make up the bodies of the three servers surrounding the serving tray is somewhat reminiscent of the kind of figural constructions portrayed by Raphael (fig. 37, 38). The lateral movement indicated by the legs and feet of the man in red on the right juxtaposed with the man in light blue in the center, who stands flat-footed, immobile with his right leg extended, is a well thought-out arrangement comparable to Raphael's *Entombment*.[237] In this painting, dating from 1507 and now in the Borghese Gallery, Rome, two figures carrying Christ assume similar positions. Both men are leaning backwards under the strain of Christ's lifeless body, the man on the left steps backwards towards Christ's makeshift tomb, indicating motion, while his counterpart stands, much like Bruegel's peasant in blue, flat-footed and immobile with his left leg extended. Created during the period when Raphael was vying with Michelangelo and Leonardo for commissions in Florence, the *Entombment* serves as an example of the intellectual peak of Italian Renaissance painting—an image in which the nature of art is as much the subject as Christ's entombment.[238] In fact, Charles Rosenberg has argued that this picture is the

[237] During his purported visit to Rome in 1553, scholars speculate that Bruegel was closely associated with Giulio Clovio at a time when the artist was in the service of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese. If this is the case, since Clovio was an ardent admirer of Michelangelo and Raphael, whose works he frequently copied, it is fair to assume that Bruegel was introduced to the work of the leading artists of the humanist culture of the Italian Renaissance by an artist who understood and admired their artistic achievements. Although we can not know with any certitude that Bruegel specifically saw Raphael's *Entombment*, we do know that he was aware of the artist's working style in general. For a more detailed discussion of Bruegel's possible collaborations with Giulio Clovio, see Charles de Tolnay, "Newly Discovered Miniatures by Pieter Bruegel the Elder," *Burlington Magazine*, 107 (1965), 110-114. On Bruegel's purported visit to Italy, see Nils Büttner, "Ein Beitrag zur Biographie Pieter Bruegels d.Ä. und zur Kulturgeschichte der niederländischen Italienreise," *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft* (2000), 209-242; Dominique Allart, "Sur la piste de Bruegel en Italie: les pieces de l'enquete," Bollettino d'Arte, vol. 82, no. 100 (1997), 93-106. See also Würtenberger, "Zu Bruegels Kunstform" (1940), 30-48, where he discusses Bruegel's limited use of Renaissance forms, which, for him, means a pictorial composition that is structured by the figure.

[238] As Vasari asserts in his *Lives*, "In the art of composition, no matter what the subject, Raphael surpassed everyone else in facility, skill and ability." Later, after stating that Raphael could not equal Leonardo's sublimity and grandeur nor Michelangelo's portrayal of the naked figure, he states that, nevertheless, "Among the finest painters could also be included those who knew how to express with

quintessential Albertian composition, following precisely the standards of representation as prescribed in Alberti's treatise *On Painting*.[239]

Raphael's artistic designs, especially his compositions of monumental figures, would have been available to Bruegel in Brussels through a number of different venues. For example, Bernardo Daddi's (1512-ca. 1570) engraving of *Psyche Taken to a Deserted Mountain* (Fig. 39), now in San Francisco, reproduces a design that has been attributed to both Michael Coxie and Raphael. The uncertainty among art historians regarding attribution only proves the point that there were some Northern artists during this period who followed Raphael's artistic practice so closely that it is sometimes impossible to distinguish a design of the Italian artist from one of his followers.[240] In addition to reproductive prints and drawings, Raphael's cartoons were often specifically requested for tapestry production.[241] A set of ten tapestries traditionally known as the *Acts of the Apostles* (1516–21) was commissioned by Pope Leo X in 1515 and woven in Brussels from cartoons designed and painted by Raphael. Raphael devised the scheme as a vast woven fresco incorporating life-size figures acting in fully realized illusionistic settings (fig. 40, 41).[242] During the following decade, other

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skill, facility and judgment their various scenes, inventions, and ideas, and who in composing their pictures knew how to avoid crowding them with too much detail or impoverishing them by putting in too little, and produced works of fine stylistic purity and order." Vasari, *Lives of the Artists*, vol. 1, New York: Penguin Press (1987), 300, 317.

[239] Charles Rosenberg, "Raphael and the Florenting *Istoria*" (1986). See also Nigel Spivey, "Pathos by Formula: The Story of Raphael's *Entombment*," *Apollo*, vol 150, no. 449 (July 1999), 46-51.

[240] As early as 1521, Northern artists such as Jan Gossaert and Bernard van Orley base some of their compositions of paintings on designs by Raphael. Sources include Raphael's tapestry cartoons and reproductive prints by Marcantonio Raimondi, Marco Dente, Giorgio Ghisi and others. See Liedekerke, Anne-Claire de, ed. *Fiamminghi a Roma, 1508–1608: Artistes des Pays–Bas et de la principaute de Liége á Rome á la Renaissance*. Exhibition catalogue. Ghent: Snoeck-Ducaju & Zoon, 1995; Ariane Mensger, *Jan Gossaert: Die niederländische Kunst zu Beginn der Neuzeit*, Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 2002. On the reproduction and distribution of Raphael's work, both in Italy and the North, see Corina Höper (ed.), *Raffael und die Folgen: Das Kunstwerk in Zeitaltern seiner graphischen Reproduzierbarkeit*, Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2001.

[241] During the last quarter of the fifteenth century, high-quality Netherlandish production was increasingly dominated by the workshops in Brussels. This was the result of three factors: the decline of the industry in Arras and Tournai; the emergence of Brussels as the principal seat of the Burgundian court in the Netherlands, which ensured its importance as a center of artistic and commercial activity; and the monopoly that the Brussels artist's Guild of Saint Luke secured in 1476 over the fabrication of figurative tapestry cartoons. The importance of Brussels for artistic activity extended into the second half of the sixteenth century. Thomas P. Campbell, "European Tapestry Production and Patronage, 1400–1600," *Timeline of Art History*, New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2002. See also, Guy Delmarcel, *Flemish Tapestry: From the 15th to the 18th Century*, Trans. by Alastair Weir, Tielt, Belgium: Lannoo, 1999.

[242] T. Campbell, "European Tapestry Production" (2002). For a detailed discussion of these tapestries and their design, see John White, *Studies in Renaissance Art*, London: Pindar Press (1983), 213-311.

tapestry designs by Raphael's associates were also produced in Brussels. As Thomas Campbell explains, not only did these Raphael school designs fundamentally alter the subsequent development of Netherlandish tapestry design, they also highly influenced Northern artists.[243] In addition, the work of Raphael, Michelangelo, Andrea del Sarto, Bronzino, among others, was also popularized in the North through prints by Marcantonio Riamondi, Marco Dente de Ravenna (1493-1527), Agostino Veneziano (1490-1540) and Giorgio Ghisi (1520-1582). Filip Vermeylen has published documents regarding the collection of the Antwerp art dealer Jan van Kessel (1626-1679) upon his death. Among his enormous collection were three prints "by Raphael depicting martyrdom" and nineteen other prints "by Raphael, Parmigianino, and others."[244]

While the composition and distribution of monumental figures supporting and surrounding the goddess in *Psyche Taken to a Deserted Mountain* is similar to Raphael's *Entombment*, it resonates even more with Bruegel's painting—to the degree that a visual comparison between their structural designs can highlight the artistically ambitious mode of art Bruegel employs for a peasant scene. The skill of the engraving's designer in putting together numerous bodies, while maintaining a cohesive order, is demonstrated with multiple Y-formations which create an illusion of recession, leading the gaze into depth (fig. 42). The clearest construction is made up by the man on the right, who leans forward to bear the weight of Psyche, and the figure of Psyche herself, who bows her head in mourning. The space left between these two figures leads the viewer's gaze into depth toward the landscape in the distance.

In Bruegel's painting, similar Y-formations are immediately apparent (fig. 43). In particular, the server in red on the right side of the painting who leans forward to lower the heavy wooden door, and, just to his left, the central server who straddles the

[243] Ibid. See also James Bloom, "Why Painting?" in Neil De Marchi and Hans van Miegroet (eds.), *Mapping Markets for Paintings in Early Modern Europe, 1450-1750*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press (2004), 17-33, where he suggests that production and marketing strategies of tapestry dealers in the fourteenth- and fifteenth-centuries were subsequently adapted by painters to meet the increasing demand for their work in the sixteenth century. Bloom also argues that the diverse subject matter of tapestry in the fifteenth century—classical and contemporary histories, landscapes, genre scenes, peasant revels, and chivalric representations of the nobility at their leisure—influenced, via linen painting, the proliferation of style and genre that characterizes sixteenth-century art in Antwerp.

[244] Filip Vermeylen, "The Commercialization of Art: Painting and Sculpture in Sixteenth-Century Antwerp," in Maryan Ainsworth (ed.), *Early Netherlandish Painting at the Crossroads*, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art (2001), 50.

bench. This figure faces the opposite direction and carefully bends down to grasp another bowl from the tray. The space between these two reveals an older gentleman across the table, possibly the bride's father, who raises his hand indicating speech. Both artist's complex overlapping of figural groups leads the viewer's eye into depth toward an old man or a solitary tree in the landscape, elements that would have otherwise gone unnoticed.

Moving now to the action below Bruegel's serving table, commentators have long observed that it takes visual exercise and mental effort to reconnect the multiple feet to the appropriate body.[245] In fact, it seems, at first glance, as if an "extra foot" is present under the makeshift serving tray bearing the bowls of food. The left leg of the server in red on the right is extended backward, with his foot arched and heel off the ground, in the process of stepping forward. In the place where his next step would fall appears what seems to be an extra foot, apparently connected to nothing. But, after a second look the viewer is able to reconnect the foot to a body, the left leg of the server in the middle who straddles the bench while passing out bowls of food. Because this server's second foot is almost invisible on the opposite side of the serving table, as well as the contorted nature of his body, it requires effort to reconstruct his lower half; i.e. an imaginary re-enactment on the part of the viewer to "re-compose" the figure out of apparently disconnected parts. Although Bruegel's "extra foot" has become somewhat of a joke, the fact that he paints a figural group in such a way that the viewer is forced to expend so much effort in order to reconnect parts with the body deserves more attention.

Is this merely a clumsy, disjointed composition, representative of the supposedly clumsy and disjointed subject matter? Or, could it be evidence for Bruegel's ambition to design a vernacular painting of rustic everyday life whose visual grammar is as worthy of close examination as a loftily painted *historia*; a willful effort to appeal to the viewer's appreciation of a complex construct?

Such a construction has a longer history with Northern artists who incorporate dramatic gestures or complex figural compositions into history paintings. For

[245] Sullivan, *Bruegel's Peasants* (1994), 50. A. Wied, *Pieter Bruegel*, Paris: Macmillan (1980), 173; C. Majzels, "The Dance in the Art of Pieter Bruegel the Elder," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia (1977) 102-103.

example, Jan van Hemessen (1500-1566), who settled in Antwerp in 1524 after studying in Italy, employs dramatic gestures and daring projections in his work, while his figures, whom sometimes populate tavern or domestic scenes, often assume the classical poses of the Sistine Chapel or mimic graceful figures of Venetian pastorals.[246] Having gleaned concepts of modeling and formal arrangement from his studies in Italy, Hemessen, along with painters such as Aertsen and Jan Massys, sought to incorporate formal elements of history painting into representations of the world of sixteenth-century Antwerp.[247]

Hemessen's *Christ and the Adulteress* (1525, fig. 44) is just one example of the way in which the artist employs the use of hands to attract the viewer's gaze and guide it through the composition. A crowded scene of figures surrounds Christ in the foreground, who bends down to write on the ground, and the adulteress woman, who stands at the right of the picture with her hands bound. Upon closer inspection of the woman and the two men who embrace her, we see a combination of hands and arms that are constructed in such a way that it is difficult to reconnect the hands to the person to whom they belong. This is especially the case for the constellation of three hands at the woman's waist, which function to first draw the viewer's attention and, second, to direct it downwards. The adulteress crosses her hands in front, while the man to her left reaches with his right arm and crosses over both of her hands. The gesture of the man's hand on the right mirrors the gesture of the woman's left hand. Between these two, the woman's right hand extends and points downward. The similar gestures and dark clothing make it difficult to know whose hand is whose. This trio of hands, I would argue, offers an artistic comparison which provides insight for the function of Bruegel's multiple feet—a complex construction that attracts, even inspires, prolonged and analytical viewing.

Hemessen's *Calling of St. Matthew* (1536, fig. 45) is a second example of such a practice.[248] Multiple figures sit around a table, framing a collection of eight

[246] Burr Wallen, *Jan van Hemessen: An Antwerp Painter Between Reform and Counter-Reform*, Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press (1983), 2-7.
[247] On this development, see Gibson, *Pieter Bruegel and the Art of Laughter* (2006), 50-51 and Silver, *Peasant Scenes and Landscapes* (2006).
[248] See also *Parable of the Prodigal Son* (1536, Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels), *Wayfarer in a Brothel* (1543, Hartford, Wadsworth Atheneum), *Calling of St. Matthew* (ca. 1539-40, Vienna,

individual hands that, in an act of imaginary assemblage on the part of the viewer, must be reconnected with the bodies to whom they belong. Due to the construction of the three men on the left, closely nestled next to one another, and the shadow this creates, the mental energy and visual effort required to parcel out the constellation of crisscrossed hands also attracts prolonged viewing and a navigation of the painted space. Similar to the three hands before the adulteress and Bruegel's third peasant foot, there is one hand in the picture that requires extra effort to reconnect, the right hand of the third man on the left, who stares at St. Matthew. Because his torso is obstructed from view, it takes a second to make out that it is this man's left hand which reaches to grab coins in the center of the table. It takes even longer to discern that the right hand directly above this one, in the literal center of the painting, belongs to his right arm that must be extended across his chest. On the one level, like the crisscrossed hands in the previous painting and the twisted body of Bruegel's server, the artistry of such a construction showcases *difficultà*.[249] On another level, it attracts repeated viewing and forces the beholder to see the painting as parts, rather than one whole; to analyze more closely and begin the process of dissecting and rebuilding the composition.[250]

The formal qualities of the figural construction of Bruegel's servers is set within an overall design that further highlights the mediation between art and nature, "artfully" rendering the "natural" peasant subject. I mentioned earlier that for decades art historians have recognized and puzzled over the fact that the diagonal composition of the table, including the position and distribution of certain figures around it, is one traditionally employed for depictions of the biblical story of Christ's first miracle of turning water into wine at the wedding of Cana. Visually, the diagonal composition

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Kunsthistorisches Museum), *Ecce Homo, Calling of St. Matthew* (ca. 1548, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum).

[249] On the importance of *difficultà* in Renaissance painting and literature, see David Summers, *Michelangelo and the Language of Art*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981 and John Shearman, *Mannerism*, Harmondsworth, 1986.

[250] See Puttfarken, *The Discovery of Pictorial Composition* (2000) for a discussion on the understanding of pictorial composition as made up of individual parts of the body, rather than a planimetric design. Interestingly, Pieter Bruegel the Younger "corrects" his father in his copy of the *Peasant Wedding Banquet*. Along with omitting the "third" foot of the server, Bruegel the Younger changes multiple aspects of the painting, such as the position of other feet under the table and the facial features of the peasants; presumably all done to make the picture seem more "natural." On Pieter Bruegel the Younger's practice of copying his father's work, see the exhibition *catalogue Brueghel – Brueghel* (1998).

creates the illusion of a receding depth, which is difficult to depict in an enclosed space. The angle of the table allows for figures on both sides to be seen while simultaneously providing a partial view of the display of food and drink set before the guests. In addition to the print designed by Gerard van Groningen discussed earlier, other examples from Northern artists are abundant: for instance, a painting of the subject by Maarten de Vos, a contemporary and probable friend of Bruegel's (fig. 46). In numerous contemporary paintings, woodcuts and engravings from the Netherlands, similar depictions of the marriage at Cana exist, such as pen and ink drawings by Pieter Coecke van Aelst (1502-1550) (fig. 47), Dionisio Calvaert (1540-1619) (fig. 48) and Dirck Vellert (1480-1547) (fig. 49) as well as an anonymous Flemish painting (fig. 50). However, the diagonal composition was also extremely popular for depictions of the biblical story of the Last Supper—both in Italy and the North. The most monumental example is a Last Supper by Tintoretto (fig. 51). Cornelis Cornelisz. Buys (? –ca. 1524), De Vos and Coecke van Aelst also employ the design (fig. 52, 53, 54).

Why would Bruegel have painted a feast of peasants in an ordered design, both in relation to the construction of figures and the overall composition, previously employed for ambitious depictions of lofty stories of the Bible? Is Bruegel, as some scholars have implied, simply using a popular diagonal composition for what had become a popular theme?[251] Considering its monumental size, 114 x 164 cm, and the high standard of the medium, oil paint on panel, I argue that one issue at hand is an interest in engaging perceived notions of artistic norms and values by juxtaposing what might seem to be contradictory notions of art—history painting and a peasant scene. By comparing Raphaelesque designs—the figural constructions in both the *Entombment* and *Psyche*—to a similar composition in Bruegel's *Peasant Wedding Banquet,* we can see for the first time the complex and ambitious way in which a seemingly "natural" scene of peasants is artfully portrayed. Though Bruegel's subject is a peasant feast, like Raphael's *Entombment* it fits well within Alberti's precepts for

[251] Kavaler explains, "No doubt other painters would have recognized the formal sources of Bruegel's *Peasant Wedding Banquet*, but this would seem a more narrowly professional matter, an index of institutional practice." *Parables of Order and Enterprise* (1999), 153.

decorum and understanding a *historia*.[252] The diagonal composition of the table and the construction of the peasant figures in the foreground create a dramatic narrative in which a story is told with variety and decorum, in a style informed by the observation of nature and knowledge of the laws of perspective. Bodies harmonize together in both size and function. The figures move in a manner appropriate to their age, sex and station (take, for example, the seated child in the foreground, the meditative bride in the center and the monk on the right who displays the gesture for speech), and fit together to represent and explain the narrative. Excess is avoided and a variety of movements and poses are employed in which the composition of members accord well with one another and attract prolonged viewing.

The visual tension of a rustic peasant scene and compositional artifice associated with history painting raises foundational questions regarding art and nature, a "natural" subject that is artfully portrayed, high form and low subject, sacred history referenced in a contemporary setting, questions which were also taken up by some of Bruegel's Northern contemporaries, such as Jan van Hemessen and Pieter Aertsen.[253] By appropriating a stylistic model of painting which emphasizes the artful construction of figural groups for a vernacular scene of peasants, Bruegel perfectly combines the artfulness of a "historia" for the art-less, or natural, subject of the peasant, thereby integrating "art" as much as "custom" as the regulating factor. In a highly competitive art market during the second half of the sixteenth century in Flanders, especially considering the popularity of Italianate painting, and amid an increasing artistic awareness of the educated elite, as evidenced in the way paintings and literature are discussed in the writings of Lombard, Lampsonius, De Heere and Ortelius, such artful artlessness, referencing figures and a composition from recognized works of painted *historiae* within a "natural" scene of peasants, would have situated art itself as a subject of the painting and, therefore, one topic of conversation.[254]

Speaking of De Heere, we are reminded again of the agenda of the rederijkers and Pléiade group for the cultivation and use of the vernacular language instead of

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[252] See p. 13-15 for literature on Alberti's precepts, as well as possible ways the author was known in the North.
[253] For studies of this element in the work of Pieter Aertsen, see Falkenburg (1995, 2004, 2007).
[254] On the presence of "artful artlessness" in Renaissance Italy, see Patricia Emison, *Low and High Style in Italian Renaissance Art,* New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1997.

Latin. In order to foster the status of a language indigenous to Flanders, formal, stylistic and rhetorical elements of Latin and French were appropriated in order to "enrich" and "adorn" the vernacular. Likewise, multiple literary historians have explained that the theater of the rederijkers in the mid-sixteenth century had ties both to native Netherlandish and to classical traditions. Rederijkers articulated their newly acquired humanist ideas in traditional literary genres. While the dramatic forms remained basically those of late Medieval morality plays and farces, rederijker authors translated classical dramas and, by Bruegel's time, began to use the persuasive methods of rhetorical argumentation in their own works.[255] Similar to his rederijker counterparts and the humanist agenda for the cultivation of the vernacular language, Bruegel too employs a sophisticated grammar of visual concepts and pictorial elements traditionally reserved for representing events from the Bible for a vernacular scene of peasants. Whether visual or literary, all of these works of art were dependent on the astuteness of the reader or viewer to recognize, decipher and appreciate these diverse forms and resonances.

In this context, it is important to restate and emphasize that in addition to numerous paintings by Bruegel, the art collections of Jongelinck and Noirot included multiple pictures by artists who more recognizably incorporated elements from an Italianate mode, one example being Frans Floris (see fig. 20, *The Banquet of the Gods*). These patrons came from the economic, political and professional elite of the Netherlands, a circle of sophisticated collectors who would have admired the Italianate

[255] Meadow, *Netherlandish Proverbs* (2002), 17. Ramakers, "Bruegel en de rederijkers" (1997); see also Ramakers, "Kinderen van Saturnus" (2002); Ramakers, *Spelen en Figuren* (1996), where he discusses the interaction of various forms of artistic production—rhetoricians, theologians, poets, artists—in the implementation of theatrical processions. See also Marijke Spies, "Between Ornament and Argumentation: Developments in Sixteenth-Century Dutch Poetics," in Jelle Koopmans, et al (eds.) *Rhetoric-Rhétoriqueurs-Rederijkers*, Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen (1995), 117-122. The same phenomenon occurrs in Italy as well. For example, Konrad Eisenbichler explains that in the work of Giovan Maria Cecchi the traditional Renaissance religious play, the *sacra rappresentazione*, came to terms with the sixteenth century's renewed interest in the classics and adapted itself to the new concepts of dramaturgy. Although the *sacra rappresentazione*, in its fifteenth-century garb, had disappeared, Cecchi was experimenting with a new religious drama which reversed Angelo Poliziano's structural innovation. Whereas the *Orfeo* had placed secular, pagan content in a religious, fifteenth-century mould, Cecchi in his *Il figliuol prodigo* successfully dramatized a Christian story with the rules of classical and erudite comedy, while at the same time reflecting the spirit of mercantile, Renaissance Florence. See K. Eisenbichler, "From *Sacra* to *Commedia*," *Bibliotheque d' humanisme et Renaissance*, vol. 45, no. 1 (1983), 108.

history paintings of Floris.[256] Noirot owned eleven paintings by Floris, which hung in his bedroom, or *slaepcamer*.[257] His salon contained a large Acteon panel (which, upon the sale of his estate, was the most expensive item in his collection).[258] Other painted subjects in his collection include: Paris with the three goddesses, Cleopatra with Cupid, and the story of Icarus or Phaeton.[259] Jongelinck owned twenty-two paintings by Floris, including large cycles such as the Labors of Hercules and the Seven Liberal Arts, as well as sixteen by Bruegel, including the Series of the Seasons. Furthermore, Jongelinck's brother, Jacques, created a series of over-life-size mythological figures in bronze for Nicolaes's country house.[260] The collections of Noirot and Jongelinck not only reveal a developed taste for religious and mythological pictures but also for depictions of local custom, such as peasant scenes, and landscape. Noirot's collection also shows that Bruegel's unique portrayal of peasants would have been viewed within a domestic interior that included paintings, such as those of Floris, with similar formal and stylistic elements, yet incorporated for a very different subject matter. Therefore, we are guaranteed that the viewers of Bruegel's *Peasant Wedding Banquet* would have had easy access to the types of pictures, namely painted *historiae*, which portray the very characteristics Bruegel employs for cultivating his vernacular style and they would have been able to compare and contrast the subject, style and creative abilities of the artists. As we saw earlier in my discussion of Erasmus's *Godly Feast*, in addition to religious and moral instruction, Erasmus offers through the speech of Eusebius some indication that art, even the creative abilities of artists, were also topics of discussion during mealtime activities. Drawing attention to a mural, his painted garden within a garden, Eusebius states that, "We are twice pleased when we see a painted flower competing with a real one. In one we admire the cleverness of nature, in the other the inventiveness of the painter."[261]

I am not arguing that the viewers of Bruegel's painting of rustic life would not have considered the peasants and their actions in relation to their own socio-cultural

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[256] Kavaler, *Parables of Order and Enterprise* (1999), 51. See also C. van de Velde, *Frans Floris (1519/20-1570). Leven en Werken* (1975).
[257] Goldstein, "Keeping up Appearances" (2003), 43.
[258] Smolderen, "Tableaux de Jérôme Bosch, de Pierre Bruegel L'Ancien et de Frans Floris" (1995).
[259] Ibid.
[260] Kavaler, *Parables of Order and Enterprise* (1999), 51.
[261] Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 39 (1997), 179.

context and interpreted them accordingly. On the one hand, as Walter Gibson and Claudia Goldstein have shown, paintings and objects in the dining room, such as dining ware, often depicted peasants and festivals to function as entertainment at dinner parties, inspiring laughter and contributing to the levity which was a recommended accompaniment to the meal.[262] No doubt the upturned beer jugs represented one important aspect of a dinner party—light-hearted pleasure. At the same time, these manners, along with the lack of personal interaction between the peasant figures sitting at the table, offer for the viewer instruction on proper behavior by negative example. As Macrobius writes: "For a group of men to say nothing at all while stuffing themselves with food would be positively swinish."[263] In addition to all of this, however, I am proposing that the cultural connotations of peasant life cannot be separated from the ambitious way in which Bruegel represents it. In fact, Bruegel's visual discussion of what constitutes art is fundamentally dependent on the status-less-ness of the peasant class and its emerging distinction as representing a particularly Northern, vernacular style. In addition to what has been argued in the past, that Bruegel's ambitious paintings of country folk either affirm or demean the status of the peasant in a changing economic environment, his use of complex mechanisms and references to artistic standards employed for history painting also serves to question what constitutes a proper work of art and validate his own style.

I have shown in my discussion of the *convivium* tradition that plays and texts, such as Erasmus's *Praise of Folly*, became occasions at dinner time for readers to both take pleasure in the texts and showcase their knowledge by closely analyzing formal aspects or offering commentary and interpretations. Discussion included laughter, appreciation, dissecting language and rhetorical structure in order to teach the rules of grammar. The companions in the *Poetic Feast* recite poetry, analyze difficult terms, resolve problems of rhyme and meter and compete to see who can give more in-depth readings of traditional literary texts. Likewise, for those wealthy elite seated in a dining room eating, looking at a painting depicting peasants also at table, Bruegel's visual

[262] Gibson, *Pieter Bruegel* (2006); Goldstein, "Keeping Up Appearances" (2003), 31, 80-142. See also Alpers, "Realism as a Comic Mode" (1975-6), 115-144, esp. 117-118, where she discusses the peasant subject in comic literature that was meant to be read in a convivial setting to produce laughter.
[263] Macrobius, *The Saturnalia*, trans. by P.V. Davies, New York: Columbia University Press (1969), 47.

grammar, his artful manner of composition, would have been a subject of discourse as much as the peasants and the festive event on display.

Implicit in this description of Bruegel's *Peasant Wedding Banquet* is a custom of viewing art that does not take the surface at face value, but considers diverse artistic practices allowing for a visual experience that is analytical and multivalent. Referential viewing is performative by its very nature; which is to say that the viewer and the knowledge he brings to the act of looking, the "beholder's share," are involved in the process of making meaning. With this idea in mind, I would like to return to the issue of whether or not Bruegel's viewers would have recognized in this painting visual references to the wedding at Cana. Thus far, scholars have only investigated this possibility within the context of moral instruction, whether or not the moral values associated with the biblical story would have pertained to its new context.[264] I would like to revisit the prospect within the context of a theological principle which was prominent during this period, recognizing sacred history in everyday life.[265]

As I just mentioned, the painting guides the viewer to reconstruct pictorial associations; the strong diagonal composition of the scene and the beer pourer on the left are, as far as I have been able to ascertain, unprecedented choices for a peasant feast. The diagonal design was most popular for depictions of the two most significant feasts in the New Testament, in which Jesus performed his first and last miracles: the transformations of water into wine at the wedding at Cana and bread and wine into his body and blood at the Last Supper. Although the use of such a composition and figural motif could be a matter of workshop practice, it is important to remember that these formal references would have been viewed by a group of people dining in the home of a wealthy Antwerp businessman and well acquainted with the tradition of hanging

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[264] See Sullivan, *Bruegel's Peasants* (1994). Kavaler argues, "It is far from clear that the values associated with this device in religious pictures would have pertained to its new application. No doubt other painters would have recognized the formal sources of Bruegel's painting, but this would seem a more narrowly professional matter, an index of institutional practice. Given the sometimes confusing exchange between sacred and secular imagery in the work of Aertsen, Beuckelaer, and their contemporaries, it appears unlikely that the viewer would have seen in Bruegel's painting a significant reference to the Marriage at Cana and the values in implied." *Parables of Order and Enterprise* (1999), 153.

[265] Also applicable here is Thomas Greene's description of this habit of mind as a particularly humanist practice. "Sub-reading" he explains is, "an 'archaeological' scrutiny, a decipherment of the latent or hidden or indecipherable object of historical knowledge beneath the surface; see "Petrarch and the Humanist Hermeneutic," in Giose Rimanelli and Kennth John Atchity (eds.), *Italian Literature: Roots and Branches*, New Haven: Yale University Press (1976).

representations of historically significant banquets in a dining room, which was cited previously in Erasmus's *Godly Feast*. While discussing the inventory of Johanna Greyns' collection, taken upon her death in 1626, Jeffrey Muller explains that the subject of some of the paintings hanging in her dining room are, in one way or another, connected with the function of the room.[266] For example, two panel paintings of the Supper at Emmaus hung next to a peasant market scene, as well as two panel paintings of a "cheerful" peasant and his wife.[267] Bruegel's youngest son, Jan Brueghel the Elder (1568-1625), represents this practice in his depiction of the *Sense of Taste*, one of a series of five paintings, each devoted to one of the senses (1618, fig. 55). With the hunting lodge Castle Tervuren in the background, this painting is an ode to the rich and varied game supposedly to be found on the royal domains of Albrecht and Isabella.[268] Taste, in the form of a nude woman, is seated at a table lavishly displaying roasted game, seafood, and fruit. A satyr is in the process of carefully pouring wine into the woman's glass. Located on the wall behind the central table is a painting of the wedding at Cana, possibly after Frans Francken.[269] To the left of this picture, hanging above the entrance into the busy kitchen, is a painting that precisely reproduces Bruegel the Elder's design of the *Fat Kitchen* (fig. 56).[270] Feasting peasants hang next to a biblical feast. Whereas the *Fat Kitchen*, located above the entrance to where the food is being prepared, is representative of the abundance of the victuals on display, the *Wedding at Cana* adds a religious tone to the pleasure taken in God's creation. An additional level of interaction between these depictions of the sacred and profane is inspired by the action of the satyr standing in the space in front of the two pictures. In the midst of pouring wine into the woman's glass, his pose and posture replicate the painted wine pourer behind him in the Cana wedding, the very moment when Christ performs his first miracle of turning water into wine. The similarity between these two

[266] This was also the case in Italy; see Scott R. Walker, "Florentine painted Refectories, 1350-1500," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1979.
[267] Muller, "Private Collections in the Spanish Netherlands" (1993), 200.
[268] For the most recent discussion of this series of paintings, see Anne T. Woollett and A. van Suchtelen (eds.), *Rubens en Brueghel: een artistieke vriendschap, exhibition catalogue*, Den Haag: Mauritshuis, 2006; Barbar Welzel, "Sinnliche Erkenntnis, Wissenschaft und Bildtheorie: der Fünf-Sinne-Zyklus von Jan Brueghel d.Ä. und Peter Paul Rubens für das erzherzogliche Paar Albrecht und Isabella," in Barbara Mahlmann-Bauer (ed.), *Scientiae et artes* (2004), 231-245.
[269] M. Diaz Padrón, et al (eds.), *David Teniers, Jan Brueghel y los Gabinetes de Pinturas*, exhibition catalogue, Madrid: Museo del Prado, 1992.
[270] Woollett and Suchtelen, *Rubens en Brueghel* (2006).

figures creates reflexivity between the two scenes of consumption, encouraging conversation among the viewers in front of the painting about possible relationships among the various fictive spaces and what implications these might have for their own "real," lived space, which is also depicted in the picture itself via the hunting lodge.[271] In a similar fashion, the interaction of feasting viewers with Bruegel's *Peasant Wedding Banquet* creates a visual experience that is fundamentally reflexive; both viewer and painted figures engage in the same activity leading to a continuity between the two.

What makes the particular visible association between Bruegel's *Peasant Wedding Banquet* and depictions of the wedding at Cana so striking is not only the perspective of the table, but also Bruegel's attentive depiction and placement of the beer pourer in the left foreground (fig. 13, 14). In comparison to the same figure in Gerard van Groningen's design, we can see that both men lean forward with knees slightly bent, resting their jugs lightly on their thighs while concentrating on the task at hand. In addition, a comparison between Bruegel's peasant bride with that of Gerard's reveals that the woman replicates in pose and posture exactly the traditional downward, meditative gaze compulsory for honorable brides during this period, which illustrated a humble heart and contemplative mind (fig. 15, 16).[272]

The possible mediation of a sacred story within a secular scene has not been extensively considered, probably for two reasons. First, the association has only been approached from a moralistic perspective, whether or not the temperate moral values associated with the compositional device in a religious picture would have pertained, whether directly or antithetically, to its new application.[273] The second reason is the general characterization of sixteenth-century Netherlandish art, from Hieronymus

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[271] This interconnection of sacred and profane motifs also occurs in the *Allegory of Sight*. Venus, the goddess of love, displays for her young son, Cupid, a painting of Jesus restoring sight to a blind man. For a general study on paintings within paintings, see the exhibition catalogue by Pierre Georgel, *La pienture dans la pienture*, Dijon: Musée des Beaux-Arts, 1984.

[272] On the tradition of the bride's reserved demeanour, see Gibson, "Some Notes on Pieter Bruegel the Elder's *Peasant Wedding Feast*," *Art Quarterly*, vol. 28 (1965), 194-208 and Gibson, *Pieter Bruegel* (2006), 120, 216. Such a demeanour, coupled with a bridal crown and flowing hair was a tradition of virginal modesty in general. As illustrated in Gerard van Groningen's depiction of the *Wedding at Cana*, this was the traditional way of representing the Cana bride. A literary example can be found in a poem by Jan van der Noot commemorating a wedding in 1563 in which the young lady receives her future husband's offer of marriage with "her eyes cast down [heur ooghen nederwaert]"; see *Jan van der Noot, Het Bosken en Het Theatre*, W.A.P. Smit (ed.), Utrecht: HES Publishers (1979), 59.

[273] Kavaler, *Parables of Order and Enterprise* (1999), 153; Sullivan, *Bruegel's Peasants* (1994), 52.

Bosch to Bruegel, as a transitional step in the process by which secular interests gradually extricated themselves from the context of religious painting.[274] As a result, the distinction between sacred and secular art is largely defined along iconographical themes. When the two are combined in the same painting, such as in Aertsen's *Market Stall* or Bruegel's *Adoration of the Magi in the Snow*, the theme that plays the most prominent visual role usually categorizes the image (i.e., "market scene" or "landscape").

This modern habit of viewing is wholly anachronistic and cuts against the grain of the sixteenth-century mindset, whether religious or artistic, viewing these images.[275] Unlike modern attempts to divide images into neatly packed divisions of subject and style, it is likely that the habit of mind that viewed Bruegel's pictures knew no concept of "genre."[276] We know that in the middle of the sixteenth century, terms such as "landscape" or "peasant scene" were used by notaries to describe pictures in a specific inventory, but these terms did not delineate any monolithically fixed notions of pictorial kind, nor the status of such a kind. Neither did they describe how a viewer should visually experience a painting, as is the case for modern categories of art.

In order to discern the possible function of mediating religious scenes within paintings that, at first sight, seem to exclusively represent a landscape or activities of

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[274] Many proposals have been set forth to account for "the emergence of secular art" in sixteenth century; see, for example, Max J. Friedländer, *Landscape, Portrait, Still-Life: Their Origin and Development*, New York: Schocken, 1963; Keith Moxey, *Pieter Aertsen, Joachim Beukelaer, and the Rise of Secular Painting* (1977); on this development from an evolutionary perspective, see Silver, *Peasant Scenes and Landscapes* (2006).

[275] See David Freedberg, "Allusion and Topicality" (1989), 53-65, where he discusses Bruegel's practice of "dissimulation," the way in which he situates biblical events in contemporary settings in order to address current political situations; Freedberg, "The Hidden God: Image and Interdiction in the Netherlands in the Sixteenth Century," *Art History*, vol. 5, no. 2 (June 1982), 132-153, where he discusses the polarity of the sacred and non-sacred during the Catholic and Protestant Reformations, while at the same time "bearing witness to the contagiousness of the sacred, to the tendency of what is regarded as sacred to be carried over into apparently non-sacred objects and to leave its traces there." See also Larry Silver, "God in the Details: Bosch and Judgement(s)," *Art Bulletin*, vol. 83, no. 4 (December 2001), 626-650.

[276] Reindert Falkenburg, Mark Meadow and other scholars have noted that the issue of genre is a particularly fraught one for sixteenth-century Netherlandish art. See Meadow, "Bruegel's *Procession to Calvary*" (1996). On the development of pictorial genres in the Netherlands, see Silver, *Peasant Scenes and Landscapes* (2006). See also R. Falkenburg, "Recente visies op de zeventiende-eeuwse Nederlandse genre-schilderkunst" (1991); Wolfgang Stechow and Christopher Comer, "The History of the Term Genre," *Allen Memorial Museum Bulletin*, vol. 30, n. 2 (1973), 88-94; Zirka Zaremba Filipczak, *Picturing Art in Antwerp*, 1550-1700, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987; Hessel Miedema, *Karel van Mander, Den grondt der edel vry schilder-const*, Utrecht: Haentjens Dekker & Gumbert 1973, 2 vols.; L. De Pauw-De Veen, *De begrippen 'schilder', 'schilderij' en 'schilderen' in de zeventiende eeuw*, Brussel: Paleis der Academien, 1969.

everyday life, it is important to note that this practice is consistent throughout Bruegel's work and has a longer history in earlier Netherlandish painting. This practice would have, therefore, created expectations that defined a habit of viewing. Issues of sight and insight, (spiritual) blindness and enlightenment, are fundamental to the culture of interiority in the fifteenth century as much as in the sixteenth century, as it is brought out in many texts belonging to the Modern Devotion and (Christian) Humanism. Not only are these spiritual issues the matrix within which early Modern education evolved in the Netherlands, they have turned out to be constructs for iconography essential to several types of devotional painting in fifteenth-century northern European art.[277] They are also addressed in pictorial modes of paradox and irony operative in many types of sixteenth-century painting, such as Aertsen's peasant and market scenes, and are the direct iconographic forbearers of Bruegel's art. Central to this pictorial discourse is the function of the inconspicuous religious motif for the overall visual and intellectual experience of the painting.

At stake in the majority of Bruegel's paintings is the ability of the viewer to recognize subtle religious references or difficult-to-see motifs, then to "switch perspectives" and redefine the painting as a result of this visual revelation. One example, among many others, is his *Census at Bethlehem* (fig. 57), painted in 1566 and now in Brussels.[278] In the hands of Bruegel, the small town in Judea is transformed into a sixteenth-century snow-covered Brabant village in which people gather in front of an inn to pay taxes. Instead of Emperor Augustus giving the orders, it is Charles V of Spain. The sign of the inn on the left is a green wreath and a placard bearing the coat of arms of Charles hangs on the front.[279] Numerous people crowd in front of a table to perform their duty of paying taxes, as is illustrated by a figure in front of the table handing over money to an official in a fur-trimmed coat. People are portrayed

[277] On this topic, see Brett Rothstein, *Sight and Spirituality in Early Netherlandish Painting*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006; Joseph Koerner, *The Reformation of the Image*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005; Jeffrey Hamburger, "Speculations on Speculation: Vision and Perception in the Theory and Practice of Mystical Devotion," in *Deutsche Mystik im abendländischen Zusammenhang: Neu erschlossene Texte, neue methodische Ansätze, neue theoretische Konzepte. Kolloquim Kloster Fischingen 1998.* Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag (2000), 253-388; Reindert Falkenburg, "Pieter Bruegel's Series of the Seasons: On the Perception of Divine Order," Joost van der Auwera (ed.), *Liber Amicorum Raphaël de Smedt*, Leuven: Peeters (2001), 253-275.
[278] For a general discussion of this painting, see Roberts-Jones, *Pieter Bruegel* (2002), 180.
[279] Ibid., 181.

throughout the picture going about their daily activities of cleaning, playing, cooking and working. In the lower left foreground, a man cuts the throat of a pig; in the lower right corner, children play on the ice; a woman in the center sweeps snow; multiple men build a structure in the center background. In the right middle ground, a man stands at the door of a dilapidated shack. In the left background, figures traverse the frozen lake and just beyond the ice two tiny figures enter a church. In the right background, buildings in the village are falling apart. Roosters search for morsels of food, birds fly, people talk and the sun sets.

Almost hidden in the crowd in the center foreground of the picture is a woman riding on a donkey pulled by a man. There is nothing about these two figures that sets them apart within the painting. Viewed in isolation, this motif is one more adjective that describes one theme of the painting, people *en route* to pay their taxes. However, because of a longer pictorial tradition of portraying a man, woman and donkey in just this manner (usually in pictures of the Flight into Egypt), we know the pair to be Mary and Joseph, the future mother and father of Christ. Having recognized this marginal, inconspicuous motif, the viewer must now reexamine the picture in light of this detail. What once were "secular" illustrations of everyday life in a sixteenth-century Brabant village must now be redefined in the context of the religious story this couple (located next to an inn) represents—the census at Bethlehem and birth of Christ.

As described in St. Luke's gospel (2:1-5), the story of the pregnant Mary and Joseph returning to be registered in Bethlehem directly precedes the birth of Christ, an event that is the pivotal point between the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. As the story goes, Mary wrapped Jesus in a manger because there was no room in the inn. Seen in this context, the viewer projects into this Brabant village what he or she associates with the biblical narrative. The people standing in front of the inn are equally there because of a decree from Caesar Augustus as they are to pay taxes to Charles. The inn crowded with people becomes the one that had no room for the holy family. The dilapidated shack in the middle ground, with a cross on top of its roof, becomes a possible birthplace of Christ. The church in the left background and the decrepit buildings on the other side of the picture form the base of a triangle whose apex is located in the figures of Mary and Joseph. Rather than, or in addition to,

structures common in a contemporary Brabant village, they also serve as symbols for the Old and New Testaments.

Although Bruegel's multivalent painting could have been viewed as a comment on the socio-economic situation of his time, paralleling biblical and contemporary political figures, I have briefly emphasized the visual experience of navigating a picture that imbricates a religious story within an everyday scene. This process of negotiating sacred and profane, redefining illustrations of everyday life in the context of a religious story, is ignited by a subtle, inconspicuous motif that is only recognized after prolonged viewing. As a result, the viewer must shift gears and rethink each aspect of the picture in a new light. The example of the *Census at Bethlehem* also pertains to many other pictures by Bruegel such as the *Fall of Icarus*, *Conversion of St. Paul*, *Adoration of the Magi in the Snow* and the *Series of the Seasons*.[280] Although in these examples we are dealing with the mediation of a religious or mythological story through small, out-of-the-way motifs, rather than more formal references such as the composition and figures I have identified in the *Peasant Wedding Banquet*, a similar analytical, projective way of viewing is at play. As Falkenburg argues regarding the landscape paintings of Joachim Patinir (ca.1485-1524), an artist who was highly influential for Bruegel:

> The function of these details is to lead the eye of the beholder beyond a superficial observation of the world and its natural beauties and to engage him in a dialectic between different ways of looking, between the observation of the beauty of the world and the acknowledgement of a spiritual reality in that world that can only be perceived with the eye of the mind, i.e. the discerning eye that is able to recognize these details and ponder their relationship within the painting and the viewing experience itself.[281]

Likewise, religious writers during this period, whether Protestant or Catholic, consistently instructed their readers to associate religious themes with moments in everyday life. As early as the fifteenth century, writers in the Netherlands associated

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[280] See, for example, Larry Silver, "Pieter Bruegel in the Capital of Capitalism," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, vol. 47 (1996), 125-154; Reindert Falkenburg, "Doorzien als esthetische ervaring bij Pieter Bruegel I en het vroeg-zestiende-eeuwse landschap," in *De uitvinding van het landschap. Van Patinir tot Rubens, 1520-1650,* Antwerpen: Museum voor Schone Kunsten, 53-65 and "Pieter Bruegel's Series of the Seasons" (2001); Freedberg, "Allusion and Topicality" (1989).

[281] R. Falkenburg, "The Devil is in the Detail: Ways of Seeing Joachim Patinir's 'World Landscapes'," in Alejandro Vergara (ed.) exhibition catalogue, *Joachim Patinir*, Madrid: Museo del Prado (2007).

with the *Devotio Moderna*, or Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life, instructed the devout to have Christ ever present before their eyes, no matter if it is during prayers or making bread. Their emphasis on seeing Christ present in the everyday develops from the centrality of progress in the virtues, spiritual exercises that lead to a more perfect and harmonious life, rather than to a kind of speculative or mystical union with God. All things—work, study and leisure—were dedicated to the edification, or exercising, of one's spiritual self and the way this was acted out in daily interactions.[282] In his treatise on conversion, John Brinckerinck (d. 1419) instructs:

> Work in such a way that you never forget [the Lord]. So when we go to eat we think: How shall I conduct myself now? St. Augustine answers us that we should approach eating as medicine. We are to strengthen the body so it may persist in the service of God…When we go to speak with someone, we should think: Dear Lord how should I conduct myself in this situation? And so whatever we do, whether thinking or speaking, keeping silent or working, going or standing, sitting or rising, going to bed or going to church, reading or praying, we should say: Dear Lord, how am I to do this? Shall I do it this way?[283]

As a result of the urban lay spirituality that develops in the Low Countries during the fifteenth century, partly due to writers such as Jan van Ruusbroec (1293-1381) and those associated with the Modern Devotion, leading up to the theological developments of the Protestant Reformation in the North, the locus of the good life is placed within "life" itself.[284] By the sixteenth century the full human life is now defined in terms of labour and production, on one hand, and marriage and family life on the other. For example, Martin Luther (1483-1546), a prominent student of the educational program of the *Devotio Moderna*, sought to abolish the boundary separating the everyday life of production and reproduction from the good life of contemplation and holiness. The Christian is called to be holy in the midst of everyday life, not apart from everyday life. For Luther, there is no distinction between the "secular" and the "religious," the monk and the shoemaker, the baptized and the

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[282] *Devotio Moderna: Basic Writings*, introduction by John van Engen, New York: Paulist Press (1988), 7-35.
[283] Ibid., 226. John Brinckerinck (d. 1419) belonged to the earliest generation of the Modern Devotion, converted by the founder of the movement, Geert Grote.
[284] For a discussion of this development, see Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press (1989), 210-218.

ordained, the carnal and the spirit-filled, the celibate and the married. All life is sanctified by God's grace in Christ, and all vocations are Christian vocations. By denying any special form of life as a privileged locus of the sacred, Luther denies the very distinction between sacred and profane and hence affirms their interpenetration.[285]

Luther explains that when washing one's hands before dinner, he should remember the holy meal for which every meal is a representation, the Last Supper, and perform hand washing as a ritual of purification in preparation to take part. Similarly, in Erasmus's "Godly Feast," a theologian who was also a prominent student of the *Devotio Moderna*, the character Eusebius invites Christ to be a part of their meal: "Now may Christ, the Enlivener of all, and without whom nothing can be pleasant, vouchsafe to be with us, and exhilarate our minds by his presence." One of his guests, Timothy, points out, "I hope he will be pleased so to do; but where shall he sit, for the places are all taken up?" Eusebius responds, "I would have him in every morsel and drop that we eat and drink; but especially, in our minds."[286]

As a result, a picture that might seem funny, moralistic or light-hearted when viewed only in terms of the subject matter represented could be transformed into a witty and penetrating visual experience if understood within the viewing context of the dining room and how dispositional facets of the image inspire the viewer's memory and awaken a repertoire of visual, literary and religious associations.[287] In doing so, the association of the "secular" *Peasant Wedding Banquet* with the "sacred" wedding at Cana implies as much about the intellectual, even spiritual, competency of the viewer as about his or her ability to analyze social behaviour or artistic practice. For, by recognizing a religious story within a secular scene, the viewer is not only inspired

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[285] On the other hand, the Catholic Reformation issued interdictions which sought to make the distinction in art even more concrete. There were recurrent objections to painters like Caravaggio who appear to "confuse" the everyday with the sacred. See also, Heide Wunder, "iusticia, Teutonice fromkeyt.' Theologische Rechtfertigung und bürgerliche Rechtschaffenheit. Ein Beitrag zur Sozialgeschichte eines theologischen Konzepts," in Bernd Moeller (ed.), *Die frühe Reformation in Deutschland als Umbruch, Wissenschaftliches Symposion des Vereins für Reformationsgeschichte 1996*, Heidelberg: Gütersloher Verlagshaus (1998), 307-332

[286] Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 39 (1997), 181.

[287] See also David Freederg, "The Hidden God" (1982), 143, where he discusses the way in which a symbol may generate associations from its use in other contexts; or, as Turner explains it, "that the latent and to a certain extent the hidden meanings of a dominant symbol in one context may be discovered by using exegetic reports on its significance in another." V. Turner and E. Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*, New York (1978), 247-248. For a broader discussion on the function of images in this context, see Margaret Miles, *Image as Insight: Visual Understanding in Western Christianity and Secular Culture*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1985.

to remember his or her own meal as a religious act, but he or she also reenacts the performance of conversion locked into the biblical story, namely Jesus' first miracle of turning water into wine.[288] As Jesus transformed "secular" water into "spiritual" wine, so the viewer sees a sacred story within a scene of everyday life. In the *Enchiridion*, Erasmus instructs his readers on exactly how to enact such an insight:

> Let us imagine, therefore, two worlds, the one merely intelligible, the other visible. Since we are but pilgrims in the visible world, we should never make it our fixed abode, but should *relate by a fitting comparison* everything that occurs to the senses to the angelic world….. Therefore, whatever you observe in this material world, learn to refer to God and to the invisible part of yourself. In that way, whatever offers itself to the senses will become for you an occasion for the practice of piety.[289]

In Bruegel's *Peasant Wedding Banquet*, present reality and a biblical story, vernacular subject in a painterly style, urban and rustic convivial settings are elaborately layered within the visual experience, requiring its viewers continuously to negotiate, question and discuss shifting perspectives about art, society and spirituality.

II.

Building on the visual conversations within this painting and the verbal dialogue inspired by it, I would like to turn now to another of Bruegel's later peasant paintings that represents and inspires similar topics of discourse. Hanging next to the *Peasant Wedding Banquet* in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna is the *Peasant Dance*, also made in 1568 (fig. 17). However unlikely, the similarity between their

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[288] For further discussions on the performative act of interpretation in Bruegel's work, specifically as it entails pictorial discovery and a reenactment of the central theme locked into the subject of the painting, see Falkenburg, "Doorzien als esthetische ervaring (2005), 53-65; Meadow, "Bruegel's *Procession to Calvary*" (1996); Walter Melion*, Shaping the Netherlandish Canon* (1991). See also Lyckle de Vries, "Bruegel's *Fall of Icarus*: Ovid or Soloman," *Simiolus*, vol. 30, no.1/2 (2003), 4-18, where he argues that Bruegel takes texts directly from the Bible, Solomon speaking in Ecclesiastes, and presents them in the form of an everyday life situation.

[289] Erasmus, *Enchiridion Militis Christiani.* Trans. Charles Fantazzi. Oxford: University Press (1981), 65, (emphasis added). On the function of analogy in Erasmus's works as a figure of rhetoric allowing the imagination to assist reason in constructing links between heterogeneous fields of study and thought, see Jean-Claude Margolin, "L'Analogie dans la Pensée d'Erasme," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, vol. 69 (1978), 25-50.

formal qualities, including an emphasis on monumental figures and complex compositions that lead the viewers gaze into depth, has led many scholars to see the paintings as pendants.[290] The scene represents an annual village festival held on the feast day of the village patron saint; if the large red flag hanging from the building on the left is any indication, the festivities are dedicated to St. George. Dancing, drinking and music making illustrate the merry atmosphere. On the left, peasants sit at a table in front of an inn that is decorated with beer and food. They engage one another in a number of ways, either in an inebriated exchange or physical affection. The interaction between the three peasants at the table, all of whom extend their arms toward one another, is a motif taken from one of Bruegel's earlier pictures, *St. George Kermis* (1561, fig. 22, 58). In this engraving after the artist's design, three men are seated on the left side of the table situated in front of an inn and interact with one another in almost the exact same fashion. This is one example among many in which the artist takes up a small or marginal motif from a previous panoramic work and forms it into a more prominent element of a painting. Other examples include the *Cripples*, taken from the *Battle Between Carnival and Lent*, and the *Blind Leading the Blind* and *Magpie on the Gallows*, taken from the *Netherlandish Proverbs*.[291]

On the right side of the *Peasant Dance*, one couple strides into the scene from the right. Behind them in the middle ground, two couples glide hand in hand to the rhythm of the bagpiper; the musician's expanded cheeks indicate the intensity of his tunes. The rough faces of all the figures, particularly the large man in the center and those seated around the table, reveal teeth or expressions that visually communicate something of the unrefined or primitive quality of the peasant dance.[292]

The emphasis on depicting figures in motion is striking. The prominent display of intertwined arms and legs of the dancers, constructed so as to lead the viewer's gaze into depth, has led some scholars, such as Gibson and Sullivan, to liken the design to an Italian style of representing bacchanals.[293] For example, the complex assembly of

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[290] See for example, Raupp, *Bauernsatiren* (1986) and Gibson, *Pieter Bruegel and the Art of Laughter* (2006).
[291] On Bruegel's habit of reproducing his own work in subsequent paintings, see Meadow, "Bruegel's Procession to Calvary" (1996) and *Pieter Bruegel the Elder's* Netherlandish Proverbs (2002).
[292] Kavaler, *Parables of Order and Enterprise* (1999), 185; on facial expressions, also see Sullivan, *Bruegel's Peasants* (1994).
[293] Sullivan, *Bruegel's Peasants* (1994); Gibson, *Pieter Bruegel and the Art of Laughter* (2006), 103.

the figures on the right leads the beholder into depth through a constellation of arms and legs; the couple's raised clasped hands in the middle ground form an arch that functions to both frame the recessional space below it as well as to echo and point toward the arches of the church in the background. To the left of the central peasant dressed in black in the foreground, a second recessional corridor invites the viewer into the fictive space of the painting (fig. 59). Beginning with the profile of the central figure, a cascade of subsequent faces, first that of a peasant woman then an urbanite man, leads to a smiling jester in the distance. Additionally, the viewer's gaze is attracted in this direction by the arms and feet of a second couple in the middle ground. In mid-step, the clasped hands of this pair are also raised while each figure kicks up a leg. The construction of the man in particular reveals that his function is as much to guide the gaze as a representation of an actual peasant dancing. His arms are completely straight, not bending with his motion, and his hat is awkwardly situated on the side of his head covering his face; if the scene were put into motion, no doubt it would immediately fall to the ground. Because his face is obstructed, the viewer's sight immediately extends beyond the figure and enters the small corridor framed by his arms and the woman's leg, which also leads to the fool with his left hand raised, standing next to a frowning man.

We can see similar visual concepts in Titian's *The Andrians* (fig. 18), a painting I offered in Chapter One as a comparison, in which a crowd of mythological figures are prominently displayed across the foreground and lead the viewer's gaze into the distance. Such formal constructions in which bodies are used to construct the narrative of the picture were also common among Northern artists influenced by Italian style—such as Michel Coxie, Maarten van Heemskerck, and Frans Floris—pictures that were much more readily accessible to Bruegel. It is commonly observed that paintings such as Heemskerck's *Triumph of Bacchus* (fig. 19), a picture that I will discuss in greater detail in Chapter Four, functioned as a stage on which to show off the artistic skill and knowledge he had acquired during his travels in Italy.[294] Multiple, intertwined figures

[294] For general discussions of Heemskerck's *Triumph of Bacchus*, see Ilja M. Veldman, *Maarten van Heemskerck and Dutch Humanism* (1977) and "Maarten van Heemskerck en Italië," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, vol. 44 (1993), 125-142; R. Grosshans, *Maerten van Heemskerck: Die Gemälde*, Berlin, 1980; J.C. Harrison, *The Paintings of Maerten van Heemskerck: A Catalogue Raisonné,* 2 vols, Ann Arbor, MI, 1987.

are depicted in a frieze-like manner across the foreground. On the right, the drunken Bacchus sits on his carriage, attended to by multiple satyrs. Music-makers dance before him. The festive figures reach, run, twist and tumble; their naked, muscular bodies resonate with an Italianate mode, such as that of Michelangelo. Bacchus's train creeps to the left, toward a rusticated antique archway, then winds into the distant background toward his temple of worship.

Frans Floris was also one of the most important painters of mythological subjects in sixteenth-century Flanders. Numerous intertwined figures populate his festive depiction of the *Banquet of the Gods* (ca. 1556-68, fig. 20).[295] The figure of Saturn, the god of time, sits in the center with his back to the viewer, watching the pleasures of the passionate group while they express their affectionate desires. The monumental figure acts as a visual obstruction which encourages the viewer to look beyond him, to see what he sees. The figures are seated around a T-shaped table which recedes into the distance toward an opening outside the garden. Other than a few oysters and a bowl of fruit, the table is noticeably empty. The gods seem to be more interested in feasting on each other than the meager food scattered around them; an activity which equally consumes the mind of the viewer.

Although Bruegel's painting represents a native village festival, it is no less a stage on which viewers could have appreciated the artist's creative abilities, not just in depicting a detailed image of a rustic religious holiday but also in connecting bodies and their appendages in such a way that the narrative is clearly communicated and the gaze is guided through the picture. As I briefly discussed, compared to the artist's earlier panoramic depictions of peasant *kermissen*, the *Peasant Dance* takes on a completely different perspective. For example, both the *Kermis at Hoboken* and *St. George Kermis* provide a bird's-eye view from which to observe the numerous characters and their activities. The ground planes are tilted upward so that details in the background are clear, for example, the stage in the right background of the *St. George Kermis* where a play is in progress. Earlier Netherlandish paintings of village fairs tend to adopt something of this sweeping view.

[295] For a general discussion of this painting, see Van de Velde, *Frans Floris* (1975).

The staging of the *Peasant Dance* provides an entrance for the viewer that is on the same level as the cast of characters. The architectural design is such that the buildings recede into depth roughly following one-point perspective. Rather than looking down on all the festivities simultaneously, the viewer must navigate spaces created by the compositional construction, first encountering the festive foreground activities then looking through the figures toward details in the background, such as a church and fool, that seem to offer some kind of marginal commentary. As I stated in Chapter One, Margaret Sullivan has connected Bruegel's peasant scene with Serlio's setting for satire (fig. 21).[296] This particular design was one of three settings proposed by Serlio which corresponded to the three modes of classical drama: tragedy, comedy and satire. Similar to Bruegel's design, this country setting offers a ground plane level with that of the viewer with a single dirt path leading into the distance. Two rows of receding buildings line the path. Keith Moxey, among others, argues that artists were familiar with the treatise's illustrations of the ancient settings for drama.[297] For example, he has shown that two of Bruegel's contemporaries, Pieter Aertsen and Joachim Beuckelaer, borrowed extensively from Serlio's illustrations for market scenes and domestic interiors. Sullivan offers Serlio's illustration to show that the homes of satyrs as they appear in ancient drama resemble a peasant village. Consequently, she rather unconvincingly argues that Bruegel's contemporary viewers would have interpreted his peasants as modern versions of the wild, salacious satyrs of antiquity and, therefore, functioned as didactic moral exempla.[298]

However, as Falkenburg has observed in the work of Pieter Aertsen, the juxtaposition of classical settings or stately figural compositions with peasant figures has more to do with appealing to a discourse on art and artifice than with offering a hermeneutic for interpreting the behaviour illustrated. By "counter-imaging" standards of art defined in Italy or antiquity with peasant subjects, a practice unheard of in the Netherlands, Aertsen creates a *contradictio in picturis* that questions the boundaries of

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[296] Sullivan, *Bruegel's Peasants* (1994), 19.
[297] Moxey, *Pieter Aertsen, Joachim Beuckelaer, and the Rise of Secular Painting* (1977), 73-89; see also Th.H. Lunsingh Scheurleer, "Pieter Aertsen en Joachim Beuckelaer en hun ontleeningen aan Serlio's architectuurprenten," *Oud Holland* 62 (1947), 123-134; Falkenburg, "Pieter Aertsen's *Kitchen Maid* in Brussels" (2004).
[298] Sullivan, *Bruegel's Peasants* (1994), 18-19.

art itself.[299] Likewise, similar to the way in which Bruegel's *Peasant Wedding Banquet* incorporates pictorial references from a biblical story and visual concepts from history painting, in the following I will show how the composition of the *Peasant Dance* resonates with formal characteristics previously employed for depictions of bacchanalia. In addition to taking up the "natural life of Brabant," Bruegel constructs a complex formal composition incorporating Italianate visual concepts, increasingly taken up by Northern artists in the mid-sixteenth century, in order to push the pictorial possibilities for his vernacular style.[300] Furthermore, similar to my discussion of the *Peasant Wedding Banquet*, the specific formal characteristics incorporated are by no means separated from the content of the image. Rather, by examining the processes of viewing inspired by the bacchanalia of Floris and Heemskerck in relation to the *Peasant Dance*, I will argue that instead of functioning solely as moral instruction, pointing out the improper behavior of the carefree peasant, the mechanics and syntax of Bruegel's painting leads, even compels, the viewer to visually negotiate specific formal and iconographic aspects of the picture in such a way that the performance of viewing itself re-enacts the delicate balancing act that is locked into the subject of the picture—the celebration of a religious holiday.

Pleasure and enjoyment in the pagan world are prominently displayed in Heemskerck's *Triumph of Bacchus* (fig. 19). The Greek god Dionysus, later adopted by the Romans as Bacchus, was the god of wine and of mystic ecstasy. Wine, music and floral arrangements are in abundance and the revelry is uninhibited. The painting resembles antique sarcophagi which often depicted bacchic processions, objects Heemskerck could have seen during his visit to Rome. However, as Ilja Veldman has pointed out, Heemskerck adds a motif in the center foreground which casts a tone of accountability on the festive scene.[301] A smiling putto disrupts the illusion of the painted surface by looking directly at the viewer and angling a mirror to reveal the reflection of a drunken sartyr's behind, as well as the excrement flowing from it. As

[299] See Falkenburg, "Pieter Aertsens *Alter Marktverkäufer*" (2006).
[300] We should remember here Meadow's discussion of the slippage between vernacular and classical proverbs, proverbs in which "carefully garnered classical Latin is translated in the vernacular to add to the repertoire of available figures for enriching plays or poems, or everyday conversation." Meadow, *Pieter Bruegel's* Netherlandish Proverbs (2002), 79.
[301] Ilja Veldman, "Elements of continuity: a finger raised in warning," *Simiolus* vol. 20, no.2/3 (1990-1), 125-141.

the wine pouring from the vase next to him might indicate, the sorry state of the satyr is a result of wine flowing too freely. The action and gaze of the putto directly address the viewer, connecting him to the world of the image. Veldman has shown that this particular emphasis on faeces—a motif unknown in classical or Italian versions of the theme—is a sign that the usual meaning of such an image, pleasure in an untroubled pagan world, has changed. She argues that Heemskerck depicts a classical theme in an Italianate style but gives it a Netherlandish moral twist. Veldman goes on to state that the now illegible inscription on the *cartellino* could have resembled the inscription on the engraving of Cornelis Bos (1506-1563) reproducing Heemskerck's composition (1543, fig. 60). The poem begins with the warning: "He who is led by an unbridled love for the wine-god Lyaeus looks more like a monster than a human being."[302] If this text correctly communicates the sentiment of the lost inscription on Heemskerck's painting, it indicates that the mirror reflection displayed by the putto could be that of the viewer as much as a reflective commentary on what is viewed. Even if Heemskerck's contemporary viewer would not have associated such a moralizing text with the artist's visual amendment, the marginal motif of the putto and mirror reflection nevertheless speak to the need for self-awareness and instill a tone of accountability. While there is much to be enjoyed about the painting, both the skill with which it is painted and its festive subject, the motif reminds viewers of the balance between pleasure and self-control; a measure of behavior that would have been well-known among Heemskerck's educated observers, as I have shown in my discussion of manners prescribed in the *convivium* tradition.[303] For example, for the Ancients, while wine brought pleasure and creativity to a banquet, learned discussion was equally important.[304] The character Eusebius also advocates such a balance in Erasmus's "Godly Feast." During a discussion about the effects and appropriateness of drinking wine, Eusebius brings out his Bible to read the sixth chapter of first Corinthians: "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient; all things

[302] Ibid., 133. "Immodico quisquis sectatur amore Lyaeum/ Non homini similes, sed mage monstro hominis."
[303] On humanism and behavior, see Ilja Veldman, *Maarten van Heemskerck and Dutch Humanism* (1977).
[304] Jeanneret*, A Feast of Words* (1991), 33

are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any."[305] While enjoyment of food and drink tempered by moderation is an issue, the context of this statement is Paul's admonition that the body is connected to Christ and anyone united with the Lord will glorify him in all that he does.

An engraving by Jan Sadelar (1550-1608), titled *As the Days of Noe Were*, reproduces a drawing by Dirck Barendsz (1534-1592) dating probably from ca. 1570 (fig. 61).[306] The image foregrounds a group of nude figures who are depicted in an Italianate style and gathered around a table enjoying food, drink and each other's company. As Veldman has pointed out, it seems at first sight that the occasion is being celebrated in a light-hearted festive manner.[307] However, the left side of the picture opens up to reveal a landscape and a body of water in the distance. While the atmosphere is merry and calm in the foreground, in the background Noah's ark bobs in the water under pouring rain and threatening clouds. In this picture, Barendsz adds a biblical motif in the margin of a classical setting of the feast of the gods depicted in an Italianate style.[308] While the pleasure of the meal is prominently portrayed in the foreground, the viewer's recognition of Noah's ark in the background implicates the indulgent actions of the figures as the cause of God's wrath in the form of the flood. Again, the moralizing motif pricks the viewer's awareness and reminds him of the importance of balancing enjoyment and self-control.

Floris's painting of the *Feast of the Gods* (fig. 20) argues for a similar sense of equilibrium and self-awareness. Fiona Healy explains that while Mars, the god of war, is occupied by a passionate embrace with Venus, Saturn, the god of time, watches his fellow Olympians indulge their amorous desires with what is, one feels, increasing indignation.[309] At the far end of the table, Amor is being honored, while the three fates to his left illustrate the theme, and consequences, of the transience of time. In the distance, a harpy reiterates the notion of time; the monster can be seen approaching,

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[305] Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 39 (1997), 189.
[306] For a general discussion of this print, see J.P. Filedt Kok, et al (eds.), *Kunst voor de beeldenstorm,* Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum (1986), 417.
[307] Veldman, "Elements of Continuity" (1990-1), 133.
[308] Ibid.
[309] Fiona Healy, "Bedrooms and Banquets: Mythology in Sixteenth-Century Flemish Painting," in Hans Vlieghe, et al (eds.) *Concept, Design and Execution in Flemish Painting (1550-1700)*, Turnhout: Brepols Publishers (2000), 88.

bringing with her doom and destruction. Healy argues that the essence of the picture is found in the two playful putti, one of whom vehemently tugs at Saturn's scythe while the other dons Mars's discarded armor. Their seemingly innocent behaviour is to be read as symbolic for the sweep of Saturn's implement which will end the Golden Age and the resulting inevitability of war.[310] The abundance on display can only occur during a time of peace, which, if these putti are any indication, is about to come to an end. As a significant painter of mythology during this period, Floris's depiction of the delicate equilibrium that exists among the gods is discussed by Healy as a metaphor for the uncertainty of the political situation in the Netherlands at the end of the 1560's. For all its apparent revelry, the painting masks a very serious and topical subject. Through the composition of the painting, the viewer is led to navigate both the foreground and background and to balance abundant pleasure and love, on the one hand, and the transience of time and impending doom, on the other. The putto in the bottom right corner, who wears the ominous helmet of Mars, peers out of the painting and functions to implicate the space of the viewer, a place and time that could learn from such a call for equilibrium.

Similarly, merriness is showcased in the foreground of Bruegel's *Peasant Kermis* where villagers delight in the physical pleasures of festivity and children dance to the sound of the bagpipe. Although the left side of the painting illustrates more overt abandonment in the revelry—drunken stupor, affectionate kisses, public exposure—this section is quarantined by the compositional boundary created by the angle of the bagpiper's drones coupled with the musician's arm and extended leg. The rest of the painting is dedicated to dancing. However, the complex assembly of the dancing figures on the right leads the beholder into depth through a constellation of arms and legs; the couple's raised clasped hands in the middle ground form an arch that echoes and points toward the arches of the church that sits so prominent on the horizon line in the background. The visual pointer reminds the viewer that the festivities on display are in honor of a religious holiday. The flag hanging from the building on the left is traditionally a visual indicator for the occassion of these types of rustic revelries; its symbol reveals that the kermis is dedicated to Saint George.

[310] Ibid., 89.

Bruegel's *St. George Kermis* includes a banner hanging from an inn bearing the figure of the saint, along with the motto, "Let the peasants hold their *kermis*" (fig. 62). The motto also appears on an earlier representation of a peasant kermis by Pieter van der Borcht, but is prefaced with lines that are more overtly condemning: "The drunkards delight in such festivals: fighting and brawling and drinking themselves drunk like beasts—going to the kermisses, be it man or woman. Therefore, let the peasants hold their kermis."[311] Margaret Carroll argues that because Bruegel only includes the last line of these verses in his depiction, he leaves the commentary more ambiguous and, thus, the picture should be understood as supportive of the festive tradition rather than derogatory.[312] Regardless of whether or not this is the case, the motto is representative of the tenuous status of church holidays in peasant villages during this period. On the one hand, various examples from contemporary literature convey a reputation of the peasant as overindulging in the festivities and ignoring the religious subject they were supposed to be venerating. The *Kermis at Hoboken* carries a quatrain that follows the first two lines on van der Borcht's print, then adds: "They insist on holding their *kermisses*, even though they have to fast and die of the cold."[313] Civil and church authorities alike often tried to limit or suppress the festival day.[314]

Luther criticized and sought to moderate church holiday festivals as early as 1520. In his letter to *The Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, Luther argues:

> All festivals should be abolished and Sunday alone retained. If it be desired, however, to retain the festivals of our lady and of the major saints, they should be transferred to Sunday, or observed only by an early morning mass after which all the rest of the day should be a working day. Here is the reason: since the feast days are abused by the drinking, gambling, loafing and all manner of sin, we anger God more on holidays than we do on other days. Things are so topsy-turvy that holidays are not holy but working days are…Above all, we

[311] "De dronckaerts verblijen hun in sulcken feesten / Kijven en vichten en dronckendrincken als beesten / Te kermissen te ghaenne tsy mans oft vrouwen / Daeromme laet de boeren haer kermises houwen." As translated by Raupp, Baurensatiren (1986), 245-247.
[312] Carroll, "Peasant Festivity and Political Identity" (1987).
[313] "Sij moeten die kermissen onderhouwen / Al souwen sij vasten en sterven van kauwen." As translated by Kavaler (1999), 187-189.
[314] Keith Moxey, "Sebald Beham Church Anniversary Holidays and Sixteenth Century Woodcut: Festive Peasants as Instruments of Repressive Humor," *Simiolus*, vol. 12, no. 2-3 (1982), 107-130; see also Allison Stewart, "The First 'Peasant Festivals': Eleven Woodcuts Produced in Reformation Nuremberg by Barthel and Sebald Beham and Erhard Schön, ca. 1524 to 1535." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University (1986), 109-120.

> ought to abolish church anniversary celebrations outright, since they have become nothing but taverns, fairs, and gambling places and only increase the dishonoring of God.[315]

The 1531 edict of Charles V, aimed to restrain excess, was reprinted in 1559 when Margaret of Parma became governor of the Netherlands and wanted to reinforce it:

> Consequently, as a remedy to the disorderly drinking bouts and drunkenness which are occurring in our country in various inns, taverns, and hostelries, held in secluded places away from towns, market towns, and villages, away from the public roads and other places, [disorder is also occurring] in fairs and kermisses, and as a remedy to the brawls, murders, and other problems that result, we decree and order that […] the said fairs and kermises shall last but one day, with the threat of a fine of 15 Carolus gilders to be paid by any and all of those who hold said fairs and kermises beyond and longer than this limit of one day, and the same [fine] must be payed by any and all of those who come to said feasts and kermises.[316]

On the other hand, Gibson and Kavaler have shown that this is only one side of the story.[317] Antonio de Guevara (1480-1545), for instance, presents an idealized kermis as an enviable contrast to the intrigue and corruption faced daily by the courtier. In his popular and much translated *Dispraise of the Court and Praise of the Rustic Life*, Guevara commends the honest rejoicing that takes place during village religious holidays. He mentions the cleaning of the church and altars, the ringing of bells, the services and sermons. He concludes by noting women who pretty themselves for the

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[315] C. M. Jacobs, *Works of Martin Luther*, vol. 2, Philadelphia: A. J. Holman Company, 1915. Cited from
Project Wittenberg, Proposals for Reform, part II: http://www.projectwittenberg.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/luther/web/nblty-06.html. (June 15, 2007).

[316] *Ordonnancien, Statuten, Edicten en (de) Placcaten*, Gent (1559), 761-2. (my translation) "Ende om to remedieren op de onghereghelde gulsicheyt ende dronckenschappen die daeghelicks ghebueren in onze landen van herwaertsouer, in diuersche cabaretten, taueernen, ende logijsten die bezydensweeghs ghehouden worden, buten steden ende dorpen ende den rechten openbaeren herbaenen ende anderen plecken: oock inden feesten ende kermissen, ende zonderlinghe op de gheschillen, doodslaeghen ende ander inconuenientien daer uut procederende, hebben wy ghestatueert ende gheordonneert […] dat die voorseyde feesten ende kermissen maer eenen dagh dueren enzullen, op de verbuerte van vijfthien Carolus guldenen by den ghenen ende elcken van hemlieden die de voorseide feesten ende kermissen buten ende langher dan den dagh daer toe geordonneert houden zullen: ende insghelijcks by den ghenen ende elcken van hemlieden die tot der voorsyder kermissen commen zullen." For a detailed discussion of this edict and its potential impact on the celebration of kermises during Bruegel's time, see A. Monballieu, "Nog eens Hoboken bij Bruegel en tijdgenoten," *Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerpen* (1987), 185-206.

[317] Kavaler, *Parables of Order and Enterprise* (1999), 195.

occasion, the meal and the playing afterwards, and the simple pleasures with which the day ends. It is especially interesting, writes Kavaler, that the *Spiegel der duecht* (Mirror of Virtue), a didactic work published in 1515, should not condemn the kermis but rather concede its attraction and counsel moderation in attendance and in behavior. Peasant festivals required caution not avoidance.[318]

Similar to the popular theme of the delicate balance prescribed between the seasons of Carnival and Lent leading up to Easter, each assigned their own span of time and function, and the abuses of both conveyed in Bruegel's *Battle Between Carnival and Lent*, religious holidays were occasions in which the ambiguous relationship between pleasure and devotion had itself become a topic of discussion.[319] Bruegel visualizes this ambiguity by playing on the newly emerging representations of antique bacchanalia in the North, combining figural constructions with a habit of viewing that emphasizes the interaction of foreground and background in such a way that one's perspective becomes a topic *per se*. As a result, the viewing and interpretive processes reenact the act of balancing pleasure and devotion that is locked into the subject of the painting. Perception itself is already part of discerning meaning. There is a fundamental interplay between the construction of the paintings perspective and the construction of the viewer's perspective of the world and his actions within it.

In addition to the recessional space that leads to the church in the background, a second corridor in the center of the painting, created by the cascade of faces and arms and legs of the peasant couple in the middle ground, leads to a smiling jester in the distance who faces the viewer with his left hand raised. This gesture of proclamation both acknowledges the activities of the scene and points toward the city-dweller next to him who is visiting the countryside. People from the city often visited these rustic festivals and took pleasure in observing the playful customs of the peasant class.[320] But, judging by the expression on the man's face, a frowning scowl, he is not pleased

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[318] Ibid., 196.
[319] See for example, K. Renger, "Karneval und Fasten. Bilder vom Fressen und Hungern," *Weltkunst*, vol. 3 (1988), 184-189; A.P. van Gilst, *Vastelavond en carnaval. De geschiedenis van een volksfeest*, Veenendaal: Midgaard, 1974; Majzels, "The Dance in the Art of Pieter Bruegel the Elder" (1977); Walter Salmen, "Der 'Bauerntanz' im Urteil von Reformatoren und Reformierten," in Beat Kümin (ed.), *Landgemeinde und Kirche im Zeitalter der Konfessionen*, Zürich: Chronos Verlag (2004), 91-110.
[320] Kavaler, *Parables of Order and Enterprise* (1999), 164-211. See also Vandenbroeck, *Beeld van de ander* (1987).

with what he sees (fig. 63). The fool's gesture is one often employed in more didactic moralizing pictures. For example, in an engraving after Cornelis Massys a fool is portayed in a brothel scene sitting at a table where men and women become more intimately acquainted (fig. 64). On the right, a woman kneels mischievously behind one of the male visitors and reaches her hand into his bag. The fool's left hand is raised in front of him inviting the viewer to behold the folly unfolding. Likewise, a woodcut illustration in Sebastian Brant's *Ship of Fools* shows a fool offering a similar gesture while he is explaining the heavens to a pensive man (fig. 65). Thus, the central fool in Bruegel's *Peasant Dance* stands beside the urbanite and raises his hand, prompting the viewer to consider the scene from his perspective.[321] Whether we understand these figures of the fool and gentleman to represent opposite outlooks on the revelry before them, one praising and one condemning, they share a detachment from the kermis activities and, therefore, function to shift the viewer's perspective from one of pleasure and participation to one of judgment, to take account of and balance oppositional forces.[322]

The figures in the fore- and middle- ground of Bruegel's painting are constructed so that the gaze of the viewer is guided into depth toward the discovery of two marginal, yet significant, details in the background, a church and a fool. Although minute in size, once recognized the viewer becomes sensitive not only to the relationship between the two but also the commentary this relationship offers for the festivities in the foreground. The two motifs are representative of the oppositional theme that makes up the subject of the picture—rustic revelers that juggle devotion and pleasure, religious observance and human folly, as they celebrate a sacred holiday. Similar to my discussion of Floris's *Feast of the Gods*, for all the apparent revelry in Bruegel's *Peasant Dance*, it too addresses a very topical subject, the questionable state of village kermises. The visual juxtapositions, both in form and content, not only function to define different, yet interactive, perspectives from which to view the

[321] Kavaler also discusses the function of the fool in the background of many paintings and prints which offers negative commentary on the action in the foreground; see *Parables of Order and Enterprise* (1999), 200-211.
[322] Edward Snow, *Inside Bruegel: The Play of Images in Children's Games*, New York: North Point Press (1997), 55. See also Snow, 13-15 for a similar discussion regarding two children next to one another, one smiling and one wearing a mask of an adult frowning.

painting but also provide a model for the viewer to follow in further analyzing oppositional structures and motifs offered by the painting.

The peasant woman on the right, who is guided into the scene by her partner, is in full stride. Her left leg is fully extended forward while the location of her right leg is only indicated by its foot, barely visible at the bottom right corner of the picture. Her long stride indicates the pair's haste to participate in the day's festivities. In mid-step, she hurdles a broken pot handle that is prominently located in the foreground (fig. 66). The roundness and texture of the handle are carefully painted, along with a faint reflection of light. No doubt it could be argued that this detail is evidence of Bruegel's keen observation of nature and represents his ability to paint *nae 't leven*.[323] However, having previously observed the importance of the marginal motifs of the fool and church in the background, such an isolated detail placed prominently in view demands a second thought.

Margaret Sullivan has pointed out that, for Bruegel's audience, the broken or overturned pot was a sign for sexual promiscuity.[324] "*Gebroken potteken*" had become a term for a girl who has lost her virginity; in the so-called Antwerp *Liedboek* from 1544, a poem states that, "young lovers are mocked who in springtime seduce a girl, and consequently marry a 'broken little pot.'"[325] Conversely, Konrad Renger uses this argument to make the opposite claim for a painting by Maarten van Cleve in which a bride holding a pot and candle is escorted to her wedding bed; that the pot is whole indicates that her innocence is also still intact.[326] Thus, the association of the broken pot handle between the open legs of the woman bears commentary on her licentious character. Yet, Bruegel's visual grammar does not stop with simple moral condemnation. Similar to the oppositional theme created by the compositional juxtaposition of the fool and church, this iconographical reference is also paired with a similarly counteractive motif. Just above the right shoulder of the woman hangs a

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[323] Picturing *nae't leven* involves picturing something with reference to a direct viewing experience; Melion, *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon* (1991), 63.
[324] Sullivan, *Bruegel's Peasants* (1994), 62.
[325] As translated by P.J. Vinken, "Some Observations on the Symbolism of the Broken Pot in Art and Literature," *American Imago*, vol. 15 (1958), 149-174; see also, Gisela Zick, "Der zerbrochene Krug als Bildmotiv des 18. Jahrhunderts," *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch*, vol. 31 (1969), 149-204.
[326] Konrad Renger, "Tränen in der Hochzeitsnacht," in Lucius Grisebach and Konrad Renger (eds.), *Festschrift für Otto von Simson zum 65. Geburtstag*, Frankfurt a.M.: Propyläen Verlag (1977), 312-327.

crude wooden frame attached to a tree with a colored woodcut of Mary cradling a naked Christ Child. Such objects of worship functioned as roadside chapels and were widespread in the Netherlands. They were incentives to, and objects of, prayers and other practices of popular religion.[327] Below this image hangs a pot in which someone has placed freshly picked flowers as a token of his or her reverence for the Virgin and Child. The visual connection of these two details, an image of Mary and Christ with a pot bearing flowers in honor of her virgin birth located directly above and behind a broken pot handle between the legs of a woman signifying that she has lost her virginity, functions to underline, both in form and content, the oppositional nature of what is represented, namely the fragile balance between celebratory, carefree behavior and cultivated reverence when observing church holidays.

Moving to the center of the image, the peasant woman's male companion also strides swiftly into the scene. The bottom portion of his left leg is extended backward into the air while his right foot is planted on the ground. On closer observation, it is difficult to make out which is the right leg and which is the left because of their awkward placement so close together. The width of the upper portion of the peasant's body, especially his shoulders and hips, is far too broad for the way in which his legs are depicted, one in front of the other. In fact, what is the peasant's right leg is more accurately represented if it is understood to be his left leg; although, this is impossible since the left leg overlaps in front of it. Given the accurate depiction of the complex figural compositions surrounding this figure, such an awkward assembly that is prominently displayed in the center foreground could, on the one hand, be seen as a willful formal construction, much like the hands in Hemessen's *Calling of St. Matthew* or Bruegel's "third foot" in the *Peasant Wedding Banquet*, which functions to attract prolonged viewing and force the viewer to see the painting as individual parts that must be reconstructed. On the other hand, in connection with his coarse face, sunken forehead and display of teeth, the visual effect of such an awkward composition also acts to enhance the rough, unrefined nature of the peasant's haste.

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[327] Falkenburg, "Pieter Bruegel's Series of the Seasons" (2001). See also Achim Timmermann, "The Poor Sinner's Cross and the Pillory: Late Medieval Microarchitecture and Liturgies of Criminal Punishment," in Uwe Albrecht and Christine Kratzke (eds.), *Mikroarchitektur im Mittelalter. Ein gattungsübergreifendes Phänomen zwischen Realität und Imagination*, Nürnberg (forthcoming, 2007).

With his back to the viewer, his body indicates that he is moving into depth; yet, the direction of his gaze to the left, over the heads of the bagpipers, reveals that his attention is settled on the drunken discussion taking place at the table. Looking to the ground, two crossed pieces of hay are depicted beneath him (fig. 67). Similar to the broken pot handle on the ground under the woman, the hay is carefully represented—fibers flake off and where the pieces cross a shadow is cast—and could be viewed as a natural detail ornamenting a scene of a country village. Upon closer observation, however, multiple authors have noted that the crossed pieces of hay form a particular symbol, the cross of the Christian church.[328] Furthermore, the right foot of the man so eager to join in the dancing—and judging by his gaze to the left, the drinking—is blind to the religious symbol and tramples on it. As with the image of Mary and a pot of flowers above the right shoulder of his female companion, arms forming an arch that echo and point toward the arches of the church are located above the man's right shoulder. Seen in isolation, a figure stepping on crossed pieces of hay in a rustic seen would not justify an iconographic reading. But viewed in the context of the religious occasion of the festivities, coupled with the visual strategy that consistently connects, and thus clarifies, the oppositional nature of marginal motifs, the man stepping on the cross in the foreground formally connected to a church in the background functions to once again emphasize the dynamic balance, push and pull, between the pleasure and devotion involved in a religious festival. The motif is an indication that the unbridled pleasure of the characters represented competes with any devotion to a religious saint.

In puzzling out the connection between theses references, the viewer is forced to visually negotiate the rustic space of the kermis, from foreground to background, while at the same time consider the peasant's daily behavior within a sacred context. Therefore, the viewer's careful "observance" of the painting stands in opposition to the peasant's carefree "observance" of the religious holiday. The beholder incorporates the very mental characteristics that the peasants lack, namely balance, foresight and insight, in navigating pleasure and piety—acts of gratification and devotional iconography—the two primary aspects of peasant kermises that seemed to be in

[328] Several scholars have suggested this possibility, both in support of and opposition to the idea; see Klaus Demus, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna*. Wien: Kunsthistorisches Museum (1999), 139.

constant conflict. While the peasants represent one perspective on the festivities, through visually analyzing both the painting's syntax and content, quite a different perspective on the church festival is cultivated in the mind of the viewer.

As Kavaler and Falkenburg have pointed out, structural oppositions, or antithetical motifs, particularly between foreground and background, have a longer history in Netherlandish art.[329] Falkenburg argues that in the biblical landscapes of Herri met de Bless and Jan van Amstel, among others, antithetical iconography in the foreground and background or left and right margins of the painting characterize the alternatives offered to the beholder as they scan the view of the world.[330] They function as "*machina*" for the viewer to "see through," or beyond, what initially confronts their gaze to spiritual insights that are, both in the picture and life itself, less visible and more difficult to ascertain. According to Jan Emmens, the paintings of Aertsen and Joachim Beuckelaer, in which depictions of markets or kitchens with peasants and foodstuffs in the foreground are combined with biblical narratives in the background, are to be regarded as moral allegories.[331] The figures in the foreground, he claims, are personifications of sensual or materialistic vices which are to be considered in light of the spiritual teaching of the biblical narrative in the background. For example, in the *Market Stall* (1551, fig. 68), the viewer's gaze is attracted, even consumed, by the elaborate and realistic portrayal of various meats, in particular a

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[329] Kavaler, *Pieter Bruegel* (1999), 10 and Kavaler, "Structural Opposition and Narrative Function in Bruegel's Christ and the Adulteress," in Jane Fenoulhet and Lesley Gilbert (eds), *Presenting the Past: History, Art, Language, and Literature*, London: University College London, Centre for Low Countries Studies (1996), 171-191. See also K.C. Lindsay and B. Huppé, "Meaning and Method in Bruegel's Painting," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 14 (1956), 376-386. For a discussion of this schema in the work of Herri met de Bles, see Michel Weemans, "Herri met de Bles's Sleeping Peddler: An Exegetical and Anthropomorphic Landscape," *Art Bulletin*, vol. 88, no. 3 (2006), 459-481. For a broader discussion of this visual technique, see Efraim Sicher, "Binary Oppositions and Spatial Representation: Toward an Applied Semiotics," *Semiotica*, vol. 60 (1986), 211-224.

[330] Reindert Falkenburg, "Marginal Motifs in Early Flemish Landscape Paintings," in Norman E. Muller, Betsy J. Rosasco, James H. Marrow (eds.), *Herri met de Bles: Studies and Explorations of the World Landscape Tradition*, Turnhout: Brepols Publishers (1998), 153-169; "Iconographical Connections Between Antwerp Landscapes, Market Scenes and Kitchen Pieces, 1500-1580," *Oud Holland*, vol. 102 (1988), 114-126. See also Oskar Bätschmann, "'Lot und seine Töchter' im Louvre. Metaphorik, Antithetik und Ambiguität in einem niederländischen Gemälde des frühen 16. Jahrhunderts," *Städel-Jahrbuch*, n.s. 8 (1981), 159-185.

[331] J.A. Emmens, "'Eins aber ist nötig'—Zu Inhalt und Bedeutung von Markt- und Küchenstücken des 16. Jahrhunderts," in J. Bruyn (ed.), *Album Amicorum J.G. van Gelder*, Den Haag: Nijhoff (1973), 93-101. See also K.M. Craig, '*Pars ergo Marthae transit*: Pieter Aertsen's "inverted" paintings of *Christ in the house of Martha and Mary'*, *Oud Holland*, vol. 97 (1983), 25-39.

monumental cow's head, while a small vignette in the background depicting the Flight into Egypt shows Mary giving up food, offering it to a begging child.[332]

The allurement of worldly pleasure in the foreground, coupled with spiritual commentary in the background is a combination also taken up by Meadow in his discussion of Aertsen's *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary*, now in Rotterdam (fig. 69).[333] Generally stated, rather than seeing them as antithetical to one another, Meadow argues that if compared to the similar spatial arrangement of the stage for *rederijker* plays and the function of the *tableau vivant*, which would have been behind the open stage and more distant from the audience, the relationship of foreground and background can be understood to operate in a reciprocal relationship, the former helping to prepare the viewer for the latter and the latter helping to explicate the former.

Aertsen also incorporates a connection between foreground and background oppositional motifs in his depiction of a village kermis, *Return from a Pilgrimage to St. Anthony* (ca. 1550, fig. 70) now in Brussels. The panoramic view of the painting reveals a procession passing in the background in which attendants raise banners and carry a statue of St. Anthony, the figure to whom the festivities are dedicated. The statue is clothed in bright yellow and women from the village kneel in devotion. The presence of peasant festivities is rather subtle while the urban guests who visit from the city are prominently displayed in the foreground. In the right foreground, a bearded beggar sits near the creek flowing in the middle. In his right hand, he holds a bowl in which to collect his alms. He is surrounded by skulls that serve as *momento mori*, presumably to aid in his request for assistance. An additional reminder of mortality is the ash cross marked on the beggar's forehead. In the center of the painting, a wealthy urban couple ride a white horse across the body of water. While the couple looks back over their shoulder, focusing their attention down toward a barking dog, their horse rears its front legs as if about to trample the beggar in front of them.

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[332] For a detailed analysis of this painting see Charlotte Houghton, "This was Tomorrow: Pieter Aertsen's *Meat Stall* as Contemporary Art," *Art Bulletin*, vol. 86, no. 2 (June 2004), 277-300; Reindert Falkenburg, "Matters of Taste: Pieter Aertsen's Market Scenes, Eating Habits, and Pictorial Rhetoric in the Sixteenth Century,' in A.W. Lowenthal (ed.), *The Object as Subject. Studies in the Interpretation of Still Life*, Princeton (1996), 13-27; Pieter Aertsen, *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, vol. 40, 1989; Sullivan, "Aertsen's Kitchen and Market Scenes" (1999).

[333] Meadow, "Aertsen's Christ in the House of Martha and Mary" (1995).

The golden, yellow garment worn by the bearded man on the ground is the same color as the St. Anthony statue in the background and functions to visually connect the saint and the beggar. When St. Anthony began his life as a hermit, he sold all his possessions, gave the proceeds to the poor and went into the desert to lead a life of prayer and contemplation. His subsequent life of solitude was supported in large part by the giving of alms.[334] Furthermore, what looks to be a crutch at the man's side also replicates the staff carried by Anthony in depictions of the saint, which is in the shape of the Tau cross (or St. Anthony's cross) as depicted on the left side of the painting. The correlation between the saint in the background and beggar in the foreground also functions to contrast Anthony's venerative audience with the impious action of the urbanites on the horse, which is illustrated by the couple's haste and blindness to a man in need. An additional marginal motif on the left supports this visual connection between foreground and background, sacred and profane figures. As I mentioned, to the left stands a tall Tau cross. Just to the right of the upper portion of the cross, a peasant man stands on a fence and leans against a tree. When seen in isolation, the man and his raised arms follow the dancing of the revelers in front of him. But situated as he is next to the cross, the man also assumes the posture of Christ during his crucifixion.

The juxtaposition of the cross with the festive peasant and the veneration of Anthony with the couple's inattentativeness to the beggar, possibly an echo of the saint, highlights the dual nature of celebrating a church holiday—reverence and revelry—and is highly reminiscent of similar oppositional motifs I have described in Bruegel's *Peasant Dance*. The use of opposition as an informative visual mechanism, particularly between foreground and background or the center and margins of a painting, is a practice of picturing employed by a number of Bruegel's predecessors and contemporaries and, therefore, was not only taken up by the artist but would have also informed the habit of viewing that engaged the painting.

Kavaler compares Bruegel's *Peasant Dance* to similar compositions of *historiae* which are constructed by monumental figures in the foreground that guide the viewer to "see through" (*doorkijk*) to small, yet significant, scenes in the

[334] On the life of St. Anthony, see Henri Queffelec, *Saint Anthony of the Desert*, New York: Dutton, 1954.

background.[335] For example, in a contemporary tapestry representing *The Abduction of the Sabine Women* (1550, fig. 71), three pairs of struggling Romans in the foreground form a central opening that permits a view into the distance. As in Bruegel's picture, figures in this gap decrease rapidly in size, implying abrupt recession. At the vanishing point of the perspectival construction is the small figure, not of a fool, but of Romulus, who leans out from his gallery and orders the abduction. Kavaler explains that the viewer's process of locating the Roman king beyond the three couples and thereby grasping the idea of plan and purpose might be likened to the discovery of the fool beyond the dancing couples in Bruegel's painting and its role within the development of the narrative.[336]

The same year of Bruegel's *Peasant Dance*, Maarten de Vos painted *St. Paul and the Silversmith Demetrius* (fig. 72).[337] The scene represents Acts 19: 23-41 in which Demetrius and his colleagues, their livelihood threatened by Christian proscription against pagan images, aggressively confront the Apostle in Ephesus.[338] A crowd of characters occupy the entire left side of the picture; they exhibit dramatic facial expressions and seem to emphatically move toward St. Paul in the center. A figure in the left foreground also steps toward the Apostle, his arms are open wide and, along with the extended left arm of the man to his right, function to bracket the crowd and focus the viewer's gaze on the emotion they display. The weight of the group bears against the figure of St. Paul, but the visual momentum to the right is continued by the apostle's right arm extending upward and pointing toward the recessional space leading into the distance toward a significant event. On the right side of the painting, three figures in particular also function to frame a view of the scene in the distance of books burning.

These two images can serve as additional examples for what was considered in this period to be ambitious paintings of history—the way figures are thoughtfully composed to guide the viewer through the fictive space and insure that certain elements or motifs were seen in relation to one another, especially in terms of foreground and background, while not losing sight of the composition as a whole. The comparison to

[335] Kavaler, *Parables of Order and Enterprise* (1999), 203.
[336] Ibid.
[337] Ibid., 44.
[338] Ibid.

Bruegel's later peasant paintings further reveals the way in which the artist mediates characteristics from this mode of representation—particularly the use of monumental figures whose careful composition frames actions, emotions and spaces that both guide the gaze and lead into depth toward marginal yet significant details—for his peasant scenes, employing the visual mechanisms of *historiae* to cultivate his vernacular style.

With this in mind, another duo of oppositional motifs I will mention in Bruegel's *Peasant Dance* occurs on the left side of the picture. A triangular-shaped red banner hangs from what is probably the local village inn (fig. 73). The banner is large, twice as long as the figures beneath it. The symbols on the flag are very similar to the one represented in Bruegel's *St. George Kermis*. However, whereas the saint is depicted alone on the banner in the print, two figures are shown in the *Peasant Dance*; Mary is on the left and St. George stands on the right. The saint holds a weapon in one hand and what looks like arrows in the other. George was the patron saint of Antwerp where the city militia also took on his name and there was a church of Saint George.[339] When the saint is depicted alone, it is a representation of his status as patron saint of cavalry. But, when he is depicted in the company of Mary it symbolizes an attribute that evolved in the later Middle Ages from his association with cavalry—he is the protector of women and a model of chivalry.[340] In a fifteenth-century German engraving of *St. George with the Stork's Nest* (fig. 74), now in Chicago, Meister E.S. (1420-1468) depicts the saint killing the dragon with a lance, while his right arm is raised with a sword pointing to the damsel in distress he is protecting. According to *The Golden Legend*, after George slayed the dragon, the king whose daughter the knight saved built a church where the dragon had been slain. He dedicated it to Mary

[339] For a discussion on St. George as the patron Saint of Antwerp, see Wuyts, L. "Het St.-Jorisretabel van de Oude Voetboog," *Jaarboek van het Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen* (1971), 107–136; See also Christine Göttler, *Die Kunst des Fegefeuers nach der Reformation: Kirchliche Schenkungen, Ablass und Almosen in Antwerpen und Bologna um 1600*, Mainz: Philipp von Zabern (1996), esp. 145-154.

[340] The popularity of Saint George, patron saint of arms and chivalry, is generally dated to the time of the Germanic kingdoms in the early medieval period. On the life and attributes of St. George, see Samantha Riches, *Saint George: Hero, Martyr and Myth*, Stroud: Sutton, 2000; S. Braunfels, "Georg" and "Georg und Maria," in E. Kirschbaum (ed.), *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, 8 Bde., Rome, Vienna and Basil (1968-76), 365-390; W. Haubrichs, "Georg, Heiliger," in G. Krause and G. Müller (eds.), *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, Berlin, vol. 12 (1984), 380-385; Brigit Blass-Simmen, *Sankt Georg: Drachenkampf in der Renaissance*, Berlin: Mann Verlag (1991), 93-97.

and Saint George.[341] By the fifteenth century, not only was George the patron of soldiers but he also was the personification of the ideals of Christian chivalry.[342] It is important to point out here that the banner of St. George and Mary in the *Peasant Dance* is on the same horizontal line as the church in the background and Marian devotional image hanging on the tree. To the left of this motif, in the left foreground, a number of peasant figures crowd around a table decorated with bread, butter and beer mugs. The man in the blue hat sitting at the head of the table bears an empty, drunken gaze; his wide eyes look across toward another figure on the far left side who enters the scene. Like the first figure, this man blunderingly reaches into the air with his right arm, apparently for nothing in particular, and his gaze is directed upward in a completely different direction; the direction of his gaze is peculiar, especially since his hand is extended directly in front of him. A third peasant sits between these two. He holds a beer mug in his right hand and places his left hand on the shoulder of his companion. His mouth is open and his hat dips over his eyes. His interest in the action at the table seems to distract him from what could be his female companion who leans in for an affectionate kiss. Directly behind this couple, another pair tightly embrace and kiss on the lips.

As with the recessional spaces so clearly framed in the center and right side of the painting, upon closer analysis of the formal construction of this vignette, we can see that the tight grouping of peasant figures is demarcated within a triangular frame, which is similar to the shape of the red flag hanging from the inn, but now inverted (fig. 75). While the peasant entering from the left completely extends his right arm in front of him, his gaze is directed upward. Although the gesture and gaze are not consistent with one another, they create an angle the sides of which enclose the couple before him. On the other side of the group, the drones of the bagpipe are angled in such a way that their intersection with the direction of the man's extended arm forms a second acute angle incorporating the figure wearing the blue hat. The upper portion of the bagpipe drones are compositionally extended by the foremost side of the village inn's roofline, whose angle forms the apex of the triangle. The final side of the frame is completed by

[341] Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend, Readings on the Saints*, 2 vols., trans. by William Granger Ryan, Princeton: Princeton University Press (1993), vol. 1, 238.
[342] David Hugh Farmer, *Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, New York: Oxford University Press (1978), 166. See also Wallace F. Cornish, *Chivalry*, New York: The MacMillan Co., 1911.

the backside of the roofline which extends downward and intersects with the upward gaze of the peasant man. The compositional borders function as brackets for the figures and their actions and they can be seen as representing one of the two perspectives that is consistently denoted in the painting. The crowd of characters participates in the pleasures of the revelry. Whether eating, drinking or kissing their gazes are empty (or blinded) and their minds are free from care and restraint.

The effect of well-constructed compositions demand certain ways of looking, whether or not the viewer is conscious of them. The triangular compositional frame not only functions to emphasize certain interactions that must be puzzled out by the viewer but also causes this group of people to be viewed in relation to other interactions framed within similar spaces, for example the figures of Mary and St. George on the triangular red flag. The resonance between the two triangles is further suggested by the peasant man kissing his lover; although his behavior is contradictory to the chivalrous act displayed by the saint honored by the flag, the vibrant red color of his hat and shirt echo the hue of the banner.

The particular depiction of St. George and Mary symbolizes that he was the protector of women and patron saint of chivalry. The banner indicates that the church festival unfolding is dedicated to him, as well as, presumably, to the characteristics he represents. For example, the celebration of holy days often included the theatrical reenactment of events from the life of the saint being honored, such as St. George killing the dragon.[343] However, in the foreground to the left of this motif, the triangular frame I just described demarcates figures that are a far better indication of the tenor of the festivities unfolding in the scene. The elongated triangle—yet now inverted—frames two couples. While one pair engages in an affectionate embrace, the other couple includes a drunken man completely ignoring the advances of his partner. Rather than reenacting events from the life of the saint, these two motifs ennact the exact opposite (or inverted) extremes of the chivalry and honor represented by St. George and Mary. The oppositional nature of the interaction between what the flag represents and what surrounds it is underscored (literally) by the couple located in the doorway directly beneath it. While it is impossible to discern whether the woman is

[343] See Ramakers, *Spelen en Figuren* (1996), 260.

trying to pull the man inside or the man is attempting to persuade her to join him in a dance, what is clear is that there is a resistance between the two, a desire for one not to do what the other wants. This pair also stands in stark contrast to the mutual reverence symbolized by the couple on the flag.

By analyzing the formal aspects of the painting, a connection between two different vignettes, and two different perspectives, is revealed. Seen in isolation, they are details that appropriately ornament an event in the countryside. Yet, when one triangular section is viewed in the context of the other, as well as with the visual strategies represented in different areas of the painting, the viewer recognizes the pairing to repeat both the foreground/background relationship between motifs and the oppositional relationship between what the motifs represent. The red banner, church, and roadside chapel are details that all occupy the same horizontal line and are located behind their oppositional counterparts (framed peasant couples, crossed hay and broken pot handle) in the foreground. The visual analysis that involves navigating the various grounds of the painting, employing foresight and insight to see the different perspectives on display and connecting oppositional motifs requires meditative thought that negotiates between acts of pleasure and religious symbols, between dancing and devotion. Therefore, in the performance of close visual analysis, the patient and contemplative viewer exercises the discipline and mental agility that is absent in the carefree peasant figures depicted, yet absolutely essential when honorably celebrating a church holiday.

We could imagine a painting such as this hanging in a room to which dinner guests retreated after a meal. In fact, we know from Noirot's inventory that a peasant dance on canvas by Bruegel hung, along with a peasant wedding attributed to Hieronymus Bosch, in an upper room above the salon that could have served this function, the "*camer boven de salen*."[344] This time after dinner, according to the *convivium* literature, allowed for food and conversation to digest while more lighthearted entertainment took place.[345] Friendly games or competitions, usually involving the composition of poetry, often accompanied dessert. No doubt Bruegel's

[344] Goldstein, "Keeping up Appearances" (2003), 46.
[345] See the "Profane Feast" where the character Christian discusses "bantor" about light subjects during dessert; Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 39 (1997), 148.

painting of a holiday could have echoed the leisurely function of this kind of room. The equilibrium between pleasure and self-control that the painting advocates would have not only been a topic of discussion regarding the theme of the painting but also for the social setting in which the painting hung, a place where the delicate balance between wine and wittiness was also of prime concern.

In the opening of the "Profane Feast," the characters Christian and Augustine immediately engage in a conversation addressing such issues. After sitting at the table, Augustine proclaims, "Let's live now and make ourselves sleek. Let's be Epicureans now. We've no use for Stoic sternness. Farewell, cares! Away with all spite, off with distraction, on with the carefree mind, merry countenance, witty talk." After a brief discussion regarding the definition of human happiness—Epicureans live by pleasure while the Stoics by stern moral virtue—Christian asks Augustine whether he is a Stoic or Epicurean. Augustine responds, "I praise Zeno [Stoic] but I follow Epicurus."[346] However, later in the meal, Augustine opines, "If I were pope, I would urge everyone to perpetual sobriety of life, especially when a feast day was near. But, I would decree that a person may eat anything for the sake of bodily health so long as he did it moderately and thankfully."[347] But, typically for Augustine, this seriousness does not last long; he continues a few lines later: "Now we've had enough theology at this party. We're at dinner, not the Sorbonne…Let's absorb, then, and not argue, lest our Sorbonne be named from sorbs instead of from the absorbing of wine."[348]

The negotiation between pleasure and moderation is also prominently staged in the "Godly Feast," a dinner which itself takes place in a country house outside the city. Whereas the host, Eusibeus, boasts about the quality of the wine being served, "The wine is of my own growth," Sophronius later responds with a raised finger in warning: "In wine there's truth (When wine is in the wit is out)."[349]

Once again, we are presented with a painting that calls on various aspects of the beholder's awareness—artistic, literary and religious—in the process of visual analysis. The painting is constructed in such a way that the viewer is led to see certain aspects of

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[346] Thompson, *The Colloquies of Erasmus* (1965), 135.
[347] Ibid., 146.
[348] Ibid.
[349] Desiderius Erasmus, *All the Familiar Colloquies of Desiderius Erasmus, of Rotterdam Concerning Men, Manners, and Things*, trans. by N. Bailey, London (1733), 110.

the picture in relation to one another, creating a visual experience that participates in the push and pull of the image, considering the juxtaposition of foreground and background. In so doing, this experience performs the balancing act of reverence and revelry that seems to be lost on many of the peasants portrayed and of particular importance both for celebrating a feast day as well as the social setting for Bruegel's likely wealthy, cultivated viewers. Furthermore, the distribution of monumental figures also plays on contemporary visual concepts incorporated for painted *historiae*, such as antique bacchanalia, the recognition of which would have inspired thematic associations between the classical theme as it was received and judged in the sixteenth-century Netherlands, namely the necessity for an equilibrium between pleasure and self-control, and the peasant kermis. The combination of antique and modern themes, sacred and profane, and a painting of everyday life in the form of a *historia*, all imaginative constructions on the part of Bruegel, would have provoked his contemporary viewers and inspired conversation on multiple levels—about art theoretical ideas and opinions, about religion, and about the relationship of celebration and self-control in their own lives.

III.

Although completely different in size and make-up from the *Peasant Wedding Banquet* and *Peasant Dance*, Bruegel painted a third peasant scene in 1568, the *Peasant and Nest Robber* (fig. 23).[350] A monumental peasant who faces the viewer and strides forward is depicted in the center. With his left arm he points upward toward another figure who dangles from the branch of a tree while reaching to grab the contents of a bird's nest. Although his legs are wrapped around the tree trunk, his falling hat hints at the risk he is taking, possibly even foreshadowing what is about to happen to the boy himself. With a smile on his face, the central peasant stares out at the viewer. He does not realize that he has reached the edge of a river bank and his next step will send him plunging into the barely visible water in the foreground; a danger that is also difficult to see for the viewer. On the left of the painting, a cluster of trees block our view, while, on the right, a golden landscape shows a body of water that leads to a farm including two barns, horses, chickens and at least five workers and children.

Jürgen Müller offers a sensitive visual analysis of this painting that emphasizes its "instantaneousness."[351] The peasant's gesture of pointing, his movement forward, as well as the hat falling in mid-air are all elements that highlight the instantaneous, or as I would call it, "in-between-ness," of the scene. Bruegel has depicted the narrative at its climax or turning point; while at this moment the central peasant feels safe and superior, concerned with pointing out to the viewer the action in the tree, with his next step he will find himself in the water. Bruegel emphasizes the "in-between-ness" of this very moment—the conflation of what is happening and what is about to happen—

[350] See Stridbeck, *Bruegelstudien* (1977), 276; Jürgen Müller, *Das Paradox als Bildform*, (1999), 82-89. For a general study of this painting, see Thomas Noll, "Pieter Bruegel d.Ä.: der Bauer, der Vogeldieb und die Imker," *Münchner Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst*, vol. 50 (1999), 65-106.
[351] Müller, *Das Paradox als Bildform* (1999), 85.

by what Müller describes as a visual trick.[352] If one disconnects the upper body of the peasant from his lower half and views his legs in relation to the ground where he is standing, it becomes apparent that they are depicted as if from a bird's eye perspective. If we were to imagine a torso connected to these legs, it would be leaning forward in the space of the viewer—not *about* to fall into the water, but *in the process* of falling. However, the torso Bruegel has painted is more upright, on the same level of the viewer. The effect of this one body, which takes up the entire center of the painting, being portrayed from two different perspectives is a split visual experience. Initially, the prominent gesture of the central farmer draws the viewer's attention; as a result, the man's torso defines a stable, parallel spatial relationship with the viewer. Following the direction of his accusatory, pointing finger, the viewer sees a young man pilfering a bird's nest. While this perilous act might produce a sense of agitation, the volatility of the instant is not revealed until the viewer tracks the path of the falling hat downward and focuses on the bottom half of the painting, simultaneously seeing the water in the foreground and the bottom half of the peasant whose legs redefine the moment by indicating that he has already begun to fall. Tracing the sliver of water to the right, around the painting's edge, we see that what at first sight seemed to be an unthreatening, shallow creek is connected to, and therefore is representative of, a much larger, deeper body of water. This process of viewing facilitated by the painting replicates the experience of the central peasant; as Kavaler explains, "The viewer meets the farmer's gaze, glances to the tree and, presumably like the farmer himself, only afterwards discovers the water that runs along the bottom of the panel."[353]

Bruegel depicts an instantaneous moment but portrays the body of the central peasant so as to indicate or inspire, even thematize, the present and future; in one figure he conflates what is occurring with what is yet to come.[354] But it is exactly this

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[352] Ibid.

[353] Kavaler, *Parables of Order and Enterprise* (1999), 251.

[354] Bruegel represents a similar moment of instantaneousness, or "in-between-ness," in his painting of the *Conversion of Saul* (1567). Having just fallen off his horse, Saul is in the process of falling to the ground. We know that this is the case, rather than having already fallen and now getting up, because Saul's right leg is off the ground, in mid-air. If he were in the process of getting up, as his right shoulder might indicate, he would need his right leg on the ground for leverage. Because it will be important later on, I want to emphasize that in the *Conversion of Saul*, Bruegel has depicted an instantaneous moment in which a man is in the process of falling, a fall which marks the event of his spiritual conversion, becoming blind to the world so that he can see God.

figure who cannot see beyond the present moment, the threshold of what he considers to be his primary task. So consumed with his mission of pointing out the actions of someone else, the central peasant is not only blind to the future hazards he will encounter in his own path but it seems that he has also dropped his pack, which lies on the ground behind him. In the *Praise of Folly*, Erasmus has Dame Folly describe just such a person: "But if ever some mutual good will does arise amongst these austere characters it certainly can't be stable and is unlikely to last long, seeing that they're so captious and far keener-eyed to pick out their friends' faults than the eagle or the Epidaurian snake. Of course, they're blind to their own faults and simply don't see the packs hanging from their backs." And later, when describing philosophers: "They know nothing at all, yet they claim to know everything. Though ignorant even of themselves and sometimes *not able to see the ditch or stone lying in their path*, either because most of them are half-blind or because their minds are far away, they still boast that they can see ideas, universals, separate forms, prime matters, things which are all so insubstantial that I doubt if even Lynceus could perceive them (emphasis added)."[355]

The format and sentiment of the *Peasant and Nest Robber* can be compared to another painting by Bruegel from 1568, titled *The Misanthrope* (fig. 76) now in Naples.[356] Set within a gray, black-bordered square, an expansive landscape is dominated by the tall figure robed in black who walks to the left with his hands clasped before him. The elderly man, whose white beard and slight profile are the only things visible from the hood he wears, is introspective, withdrawn into his own thoughts. The viewer even gets a sense of bitterness, communicated by the scowl on his face. Three small thorny objects lie on the ground in front of him which will no doubt cause the man anguish within his next few steps. Behind the monumental, dark figure, a smaller barefooted man wields a knife in order to cut the purse, or money bag, that was hidden beneath "the misanthrope's" cloak. So consumed with his own thoughts or worries, the hooded figure does not notice the actions of the thief. With his lack of awareness of the stumbling blocks set before him and his bag being stolen behind him, similar to

[355] Desiderus Erasmus, *Praise of Folly and Letter to Maarten van Dorp*. trans. Betty Radice, London and New York: Penguin Books (1993), 34, 85.
[356] For detailed examination of this painting, see Margaret Sullivan, "Bruegel's Misanthrope: Renaissance Art for a Humanist Audience," *Artibus et historiae*, vol. 13, no. 26 (1992), 143-162.

the farmer in the *Peasant and Nest Robber*, this man's self-absorption also resonates with the characteristics of folly just quoted from Erasmus.

The thief is encased in a transparent orb surmounted by a cross. This motif appears as a detail in a previous painting by Bruegel, the *Netherlandish Proverbs* in Berlin (1559, fig. 77). In this context, the glass globe represents the "world" and illustrates the proverb, "one must stoop to get through the world."[357] In *The Misanthrope*, however, the man inside the globe performs quite a different act, robbery, and can be understood more broadly as representing the deceit and greed that characterize the world in general. To insure proper understanding of the image, two lines of text written in Dutch were added to the painting later: "Om dat de werelt is soe ongetru, Daer om gha ic in den ru" (because the world is so deceitful, I go in mourning). A print after the painting also includes a French version of the same lines. Despite the fact that the text is not contemporary with Bruegel, they nevertheless are consistent with the impression created by the old man and can offer an indication for how the image could have been understood by Bruegel's viewers.

In a similar way, George Hulin de Loo has speculated that Bruegel's *Peasant and Nest Robber* should be related to a text, a vernacular proverb about the value of the active life over the passive one.[358] Bruegel's *Beekeepers* (1568, fig. 78), a drawing made in the same year, depicts a figure in a tree similar to the one in the *Nest Robber* and bears a text in the lower left corner that reads: "dye den nest Weet dye Weeten / dyen Roft dy heefen." In English, it would best be translated as: "He who knows of the nest has the knowledge; he who robs it has it."[359] Based on the similar motifs, Huilin de Loo concludes that in the painting the boy in the tree "has" while the peasant about to step in the water simply "knows" and will soon disappear.

While the *Peasant and Nest Robber* can be compared to the format and sentiment of *The Misanthrope*, similar to the *Peasant Wedding Banquet* and *Peasant Dance*, there is much more to be said about the painting regarding the mediation, or in this case translation, of formal and stylistic elements traditionally found in history painting for a representation of local rustic life. Like the previous two pictures, the

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[357] Ibid. See also Meadow, *Pieter Bruegel's Netherlandish Proverbs* (2002), 41.
[358] Van Bastelaer and Hulin de Loo, *Peter Bruegel l'Ancien* (1907). See also Kjell Boström, "Das Sprichwort vom Vogelnest," *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift*, vol. 18 (1949), 77-98.
[359] Kavaler, *Parables of Order and Enterprise* (1999), 234.

recognition of these visual elements would have inspired reflection among Bruegel's contemporary viewers not only about art *per se* but also regarding possible thematic connections between the subject of the painting and the sources he references, providing impetus for yet another level of conversation and interpretation.

In addition to this painting being a detailed, complex representation of a farmer in his rustic surroundings, possibly even an illustration of self-righteous blindness described by Erasmus, scholars such as Carl Stridbeck and Müller have also commented on the formal and stylistic elements of the picture. For example, the pose and stocky body of the central figure has been connected to a number of possible Italian sources, including two figures from Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel: the Christ figure in the *Last Judgment*, with his short but sturdy legs, and the putto beneath the Erythraean Sibyl on the ceiling (fig. 24). However, an engraving by Marcantonio Raimondi of St. John in the wilderness provides an almost exact visual precedent for the way Bruegel constructs his central figure, both in pose and posture (fig. 26). Situated between two trees, the lone Baptist is in mid-step (both heels are off the ground) and gestures across his chest; his pointing hand intersects with his staff which bears a cross at its end. In contrast to Bruegel's peasant, however, the body of this figure is constructed from a single, consistent perspective that is parallel to the viewer.

The farmer's pointing gesture has also been associated with a painting of *John the Baptist* by Leonardo, now in the Louvre (fig. 25).[360] Upon closer observation, the two figures by Bruegel and Leonardo also share a strikingly similar facial structure and expression—they both have widely separated eyes, elongated noses and faint smiles—as well as *contrapposto* positioning. The facial expression, which only hints at a grin, illustrates not so much an emotion of joy, as it does one of fulfillment.[361] According to scripture, the Baptist proclaims, "The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. For this reason my joy has been

[360] See Tolnay, "Bruegel et l'Italie" (1951), 121-130; Müller, *Das Paradox als Bildform* (1999), 83; Vinken and Schlüter, "Pieter Bruegels *Nestrover*" (1996), 54-79.
[361] The so-called "mysterious smile" was much copied by Leonardo's students. On its peculiarity and popularity, see Raymond S. Stites, *The Sublimations of Leonardo* (1970), 357; Michael Kwakkelstein, *Leonardo da Vinci as a Physiognomist: Theory and Drawing*, Leiden: Primavera Press, 1994; Ritchie Calder, "Anatomy of the Gioconda Smile," in *Leonardo and the Age of the Eye*, London: Heinemann (1970), 141-163; Flavio Caroli, *Leonardo: Studi de fisiognomica*, Milan: 1991. Other examples include *Leda* and *Virgin and Child and St. Anne.*

fulfilled."[362] Bruegel presents a comparable face slightly tilted to the right bearing a contented, similarly fish-eyed gaze with a closed mouth upturned at the ends. However, unlike the Baptist's spiritual contentment, it seems that the peasant's grin has more to do with a fulfillment that is false; his self-righteous fixation with the ambitious man in the tree has blinded him to the hazards in his own path. Although his widely separated eyes have been described as characteristic of crude peasant features, when coupled with his long nose and faint smile and seen in comparison to the face of Leonardo's Baptist, the visual similarities are compelling.[363]

Leonardo was the first Italian artist whose influence was felt in the North, as can be observed in the art of Quentin Massys, Jan Massys and Joos van Cleve.[364] It is generally agreed that the Baptist painting should be dated ca. 1513-1516, the final stage of Leonardo's career when he moved from Rome to Cloux (near Amboise), France to work in the court of King Francis I. The popularity of his representation of the saint is illustrated in the number of his pupils who copied it; their work appears in various collections.[365] One such painting, which was probably a collaboration between Leonardo and a pupil, is titled *Baptist/Bacchus*, also dated ca. 1513-1516 and now in the Louvre (fig. 27). In terms of its overall composition, including the facial expression and gesture of the central figure, it bears an even closer resemblance to Bruegel's *Peasant and Nest Robber*.[366]

Although there are vast differences between the content of the collaborative painting from Leonardo's design and Bruegel's picture—religious subject versus peasant scene—they also share certain iconographic motifs. In the design after Leonardo, John the Baptist holds a staff with his left hand and points with his index

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[362] John 3: 29.
[363] Gibson describes his expression as vacuous, *Bruegel* (1985), 188; Kavaler explains that he, "lacks fashionably refined features and his eyes may be set rather far apart;" Kavaler, *Pieter Bruegel* (1999), 252.
[364] See Larry Silver, *The Paintings of Quintin Massys*, Oxford: Phaidon, 1984; John Oliver Hand, *Joos van Cleve: The Complete Paintings*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004. On the use of Leonardo's compositions in Germany and the Netherlands as early as the 1520's, see Cécile Scailliérez, "Joos van Cleve e Genova," *Pittura fiamminga in Liguria*, Milano: Cinsello Balsamo (1997), 111-125.
[365] Edoardo Villata, "Forse il più importante di tutti i quadri:" elementi per la fortuna critica del 'San Giovanni Battista' di Leonardo," *Raccolta Vinciana*, vol. 30 (2003), 85-132; C. Pedretti, *Leonardo* (1973), 166. For a sensitive study on Leonardo's painting and particular changes that are made in copies, see Klaus Krüger, *Das Bild als Schleier des Unsichtbaren. Ästhetische Illusion in der Kunst der frühen Neuzeit in Italien*, München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag (2001), 101-106, 128-131.
[366] See n. 56 for literature addressing the *Baptist/Bacchus* painting.

finger downward toward what is most likely the river Jordan continued from the background. The plants and flowers are given special attention, as is usually the case in contemporaneous depictions of the solitary Baptist in the wilderness, especially the eclectic herb garden on the left side. For example, a similar cluster of vegetation can be found next to a river bank in the foreground of a painting of *St. John in the Wilderness* by Pintoricchio (fig. 28). The plants in Leonardo's painting can be traced to various botanical studies drawn by the artist. William Emboden argues that the abundant vegetation in the painting was probably designed by Leonardo, if not executed by him, and it contains some iconographic religious elements appropriate to St. John; the columbine in the foreground expresses Christian hope of redemption to be achieved through Christ and the sacrament of Baptism.[367] His right arm extends across his chest gesturing toward what would have been, in the original version, the cross at the end of his staff, visually referencing his biblical prophecy of Christ's coming, "there is one that cometh after me."[368] The history of images depicting John the Baptist from the fourteenth century onward, both in Italy and the North, reveal this gesture upward to be one of his attributes.[369] Further, the angle of John's staff, and its now painted-out cross, is extended in the background by the solitary tree stump crowned with jagged splinters. The stump or, even better, dead tree resting on the overhang of the cliff, is an additional standard iconographic motif in images of the Baptist and recalls the verses in which he instructs the Pharisees and Suddacees, "Produce fruit in keeping with repentance," and later, "The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."[370] For example, situated in a niche in an inner room of the cathedral in Reims, a statue of John shows the saint pointing across his chest with his left hand and, with his right, pointing downward toward a dead tree with an axe at its trunk (fig. 80).[371] To the left of the central figure, an atmospheric golden landscape unfolds in the

[367] See William Emboden, *Leonardo Da Vinci on Plants and Gardens*, Portland: Dioscorides Press (1987), 137.
[368] Matthew 3: 11.
[369] See Friedrich-August v. Metzsch, *Johannes der Täufer: Seine Geschichte und seine Darstellung in der Kunst*, München: Callwey, 1989.
[370] Matthew 3: 8-10.
[371] For more on this attribute, see Metzsch, *Johannes der Täufer* (1989).

distance and is ornamented with a deer, horse and large body of water, most likely the river Jordan.

Bruegel's *Peasant and Nest Robber* assumes a very similar composition, but in reverse—the cluster of trees is now on the left and open landscape with animals, farm and body of water on the right.[372] Though not seated like the Baptist from Leonardo's studio, a central figure strides directly toward the viewer. As previously mentioned, the forceful, articulated pose of the farmer's body is painted in an Italianate style, especially in comparison to the stumpy, almost shapeless, manner with which peasant figures were previously depicted in the North.[373] With his left arm, the peasant gestures upward and across his chest. In comparison to the figure in the *Baptist/Bacchus* painting who points to the cross on his staff which directs the viewer's gaze toward a dead tree stump, a symbol calling attention to one's moral actions, the central figure in Bruegel's picture points his finger toward the nest robber who seems to be safely fastened to the tree. But, the central figure also carries a staff that points in the direction of the hat that once was settled securely on the youth's head but now is falling to the ground, hinting at the risk—in line with the central peasant himself—that a fall might be in this boy's future as well.

As in the *Baptist/Bacchus* picture, an eclectic assortment of plants and flowers are gathered at the bank of the river to the left of the central peasant figure in the foreground. The bouquet of vegetation—fern, blue iris, bramble bush, and herbs—would not have naturally grown together in such a marshy area.[374] Each plant carries iconographic undertones that could have been familiar to Bruegel's sixteenth-century viewer. The most obvious example is the blue iris (*iris germanica*) which appears in a painting by Bruegel made in the same year, *The Blind Leading the Blind* (fig. 81), now in Naples. Like *The Misanthrope*, this painting on canvas can be related to a text and, therefore, the meaning determined, at least on the surface, with a little more certainty. In Luke 6:39, Jesus asks: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a ditch?" The passage addresses the dangers of false prophecy, as well as the value of spiritual understanding over earthly sight. In the painting, two blind men fall into a

[372] The reversal of Bruegel's composition in comparison to Leonardo's might indicate that Bruegel saw a reproduction of this painting in print.
[373] See Raupp, *Bauernsatiren* (1986).
[374] Vinken and Schlüter, "Pieter Bruegels *Nestrover*" (1996), 62.

ditch, while four others behind them follow in their path. On the water's edge, directly located above the two men already falling, appears an iris. The iris is prominently located next to a representation of blindness; having followed a blind leader, the men have themselves become blind. While Pierre Vinken and Lucy Schlüter argue that the iris is a general symbol for transience or mortality, others argue that it refers to Mary's compassion (parallel to its primary meaning in religious painting) or, more precisely, to Simeon's foretelling of her future suffering because of the death of her son.[375] This sense of foreboding is brought out in a painting by Hugo van der Goes (1440-1482) of *Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden* (fig. 82). The two figures stand naked in Eden next to the tree of knowledge. The teeth marks in the apple held in Eve's right hand indicate that she has already been convinced by the devil to taste the forbidden fruit. She now reaches upward to pluck an apple for Adam. In the center foreground, a high rising blue iris bloom covers her genitals. This moment represents the fall of humanity and the introduction of death into the world. While Eve's wide-eyed gaze into empty space emphasizes her earthly sight, it also betrays her spiritual blindness; she is now under the spell of the devil and unable to see the consequences of her actions. While the iris in this context carries with it connotations of suffering and death, especially Christ's passion, its location over Eve's genitals also calls to mind the purity of Mary, the second eve, whose virgin birth gave life to Christ, the second Adam and atonement for humanity's depravity. Like the irises in Hugo's painting and *The Blind Leading the Blind*, in the *Peasant and Nest Robber* an iris is also located in the foreground next to a visual expression of blindness, the central peasant who is blind to the risks in his own path due to his self-righteous preoccupation with the hazardous behavior of another.

Based on the similarities I have discussed between the compositional, iconographic and stylistic elements employed for diverse depictions of John the Baptist and Bruegel's *Peasant and Nest Robber*, I would like to suggest that these resonances would have been recognized by Bruegel's contemporary viewers and discussed as such. This is not only the case for specific stylistic or formal elements incorporated by Leonardo—such as the hand gesture, facial characteristics and overall composition of

[375] Reindert Falkenburg, *Joachim Patinir: het landschap als beeld van de levenspelgrimage*, Nijmegen (1985), 41. See also M. Levi-d'Ancona, *The Garden of the Renaissance: Botanical Symbolism in Italian Painting*, Florence (1977), 185-188.

the picture—but also for depictions of St. John in the wilderness more generally, such as the engraving by Marcantonio Raimondi. On the one hand, these references betoken Bruegel's artistic awareness, an intimate conversation with artistic practice, both in Italy and the North, and the innovative spirit with which he mediates characteristics from history painting to cultivate his own vernacular style. On the other hand, the division of and play with the form and content of previous models is a rhetorical technique that remains consistent throughout his work, as I have discussed it in relation to the *Peasant Wedding Banquet* and *Peasant Dance*, and could have led to discussions among Bruegel's contemporary viewers about possible insights the life of John the Baptist might offer for discussing potential interpretations of the panel, especially the importance of spiritual discernment in everyday life.

Müller argues that the *Peasant and Nest Robber* should be seen within the context of Erasmian ironic philosophy, the most well-known example being his *Praise of Folly*, not only in regards to the iconography but also in terms of artistic style.[376] A woodcut illustration from a chapter of Sebastian Brant's *Sottenschip* shows a fool toppling from a tree with a bird's nest in his hand (fig. 83). The text warns against trusting too much to fortune, since "He who climbs unwisely often falls hard,"[377] and later "live soberly and moderately, not doing more by good fortune than is proper for one's station."[378] Contrary to Brant, Müller argues, Bruegel transforms the meaning of the nest robber into positive; on Bruegel's panel it is not the boy who is falling from the tree, or will fall, but the arrogant central peasant. The drama of the painting consists in the turning upside-down safety and danger. He who blindly thinks he is safe actually lives dangerously. Although Müller does not argue for one specific artistic quote, he asserts that the mixture of a lowly peasant subject with a generally Italian manner of painting traditionally deployed for depicting lofty *historiae* highlights the contradictory relationship between form and content, a contradiction that would have been understood as simultaneously ridiculing the central peasant and Italian style.

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[376] Jürgen Müller, *Das Paradox* (1999), 82-89.
[377] Brant (1548), ch. 109, "Die climt onwijsselick valt dicwijl swaerlick." As translated by E.H. Zeydel, New York: Columbia University Press, 1944.
[378] Ibid. "Al eest dan dat ons fortune toe lacht wi en sullense niet te seer betrouwe[n] noch achter volge[n] / mer doen als dye wijse die in voor spoede he[m] wapent teghen wederspoet dat is leeft soberlic en [de] tamelijc niet doende na sijn gheluc mer na sine[n] staet en [de] toebehoorte."

Vinken and Schlüter argue that the picture should be understood as a kind of *memento mori*, rather than adhering to a particular sixteenth-century adage as Hulin de Loo claims.[379] According to the authors, the scene is an allegory concerning man's mortality, a theme brought out by the paintings details. For example, they contend that theft and more specifically the act of robbing a bird's nest were common metaphors for Death, and the bird itself served as a metaphor for the soul. However, Klaus Demus takes a different direction. Observing the importance of the vernacular translation of the Bible during the Reformation, he points out the close resemblance between the Netherlandish proverb (he who knows of the nest has the knowledge; he who robs it has it) and the words of John the Baptist in John 3: 29-30: "He who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice."[380]

In my mind, while each of these observations touches upon several different ideas the painting raises, it is Müller's theme of inversion that characterizes the way in which artistic and sacred ideas are mediated into a vernacular representation of everyday life. For a picture that depicts a farmer self-righteously consumed with pointing to a figure behind him, Bruegel has employed a style, composition and iconography that resonates with those used for John the Baptist, the prophet who was also obsessed with pointing to a man coming behind him. Only, in this case, his motivation is the exact opposite—complete self-denial. A peasant whose fixation leads to him being totally unaware of his (literal) place in the world, about to disappear into the water before him, is formally depicted in such a way that it would have awakened in the mind of the viewer associations with the religious figure who was well aware of his role as an "in-between," to point to Christ, "he that cometh after me," then immediately disappear into the background of the story, "He must increase, but I must decrease."[381] Whether out of humble or self-righteous motivations, both St. John and the central peasant are unable to see beyond the threshold of what they deem their place in the world, to point to who comes behind them. Whereas St. John is only

[379] Vinken and Schlüter, "Pieter Bruegels *Nestrover*" (1996), 59-60.
[380] Klaus Demus, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder* (1999), 123.
[381] John 3: 30. See also Lyckle de Vries, "Bruegel's *Fall of Icarus*" (2003), where he argues that Bruegel takes texts directly from the Bible, Solomon speaking in Ecclesiastes, and presents them in the form of everyday life.

concerned with pointing out what at that moment is invisible, engendering in his audience a spiritual vision for Christ that insures future salvation, the central peasant's obsession with pointing toward what is visible behind him is an indication of his worldly concerns and his inability to see his own impending doom to come.

Similar to Bruegel's *Peasant Wedding Banquet* and *Peasant Dance*, the *Peasant and Nest Robber* is put together in such a way that the formal and stylistic elements beg for closer analysis and feed the analytical minds of its contemporary viewers. By imbricating the sacred and profane, Northern and Italian, art and literature, the image not only allows for different levels of interpretation, but constructs them. The picture is a visual discourse, if you will, that would have inspired a similar conversational mode as represented in the *convivium* tradition; an experience in which the beholder must parley and connect different voices speaking to one another: the beauty of nature represented and the artistic form in which it is shaped, a sacred story (and the iconographical tradition associated with it) and profane life (including the literary tradition that describes it). The recognition of Bruegel's translation of a religious visual tradition for a painting of rural life calls on—indeed, is dependant on—various levels of viewer awareness—literary, religious and artistic—during the process of analysis. Central to the viewing experience Bruegel's picture creates is the ability of the viewer to recognize subtle artistic, stylistic and/or iconographic references and to analyze and discuss them on multiple different levels.

Such mixing and mingling of form and content may seem difficult for modern viewers to assimilate, but Bruegel's educated sixteenth-century audience would have been trained in such a practice. It can be compared to a similar exercise in rhetorical pedagogy. According to Juan Luis Vives (1492-1540), students were required during the Renaissance to keep notebooks divided into form and content.[382] By form is meant the design, structure or pattern of arranging literary elements (prose, drama or poetry). By content is meant the subject, meaning or significance. The practice of imitation, one aspect of their rhetorical education, required them to analyze form and content. They were asked to observe a model closely and then to copy the form but supply new

[382] On the use of the notebook system as an adjunct to rhetorical practice and an aid to education, and therefore highly important for understanding the habits of mind of Bruegel's contemporary viewers, see Meadow, *Pieter Bruegel's* Netherlandish Proverbs (2002), 85-97.

content; or to copy the content but supply a new form. Such imitations occurred on every level of speech and language, and forced students to assess what exactly a given form did to bring about a given meaning or effect.[383]

This educational device of deconstructing and reassembling form and content in varying contexts could have also defined, at least in part, the viewing habits of Bruegel's educated audience, especially in the context of the *convivium* tradition as I have described it. Similar to the way in which dinner companions in the *Poetic Feast* recite poetry, analyze difficult terms, resolve problems of rhyme and meter and offer diverse readings of traditional manuscripts, paintings such as the *Peasant and Nest Robber*, *Peasant Wedding Banquet* and *Peasant Dance*, with their stylistic and iconographic references, would have inspired similar discussions on the way in which form and content interact within their visual grammar. This nuanced viewing involves an analysis of painting that takes place on a number of different levels and seeks to connect, or at least intertwine, heterogeneous concepts.

Similar to the *Peasant Wedding Banquet*, the *Peasant and Nest Robber* mediates artful forms and iconography traditionally employed for a religious subject within a painting that, if taken at face value, seems to depict a rustic scene of a peasant, a subject indigenous to the North. The tension generated between form and content, sacred and profane creates an ambivalence that inspires more in-depth investigation on both artistic and religious grounds. Present reality and a biblical story, vernacular subject in a painterly style, are layered within the painting, encouraging viewers continuously to negotiate, question and discuss shifting perspectives about artistic standards as well as the translation and recognition of sacred stories in everyday life.

In this shift in perspective, from sight to insight or from seeing to understanding, Bruegel's treatment of previous visual vocabulary in new and innovative ways is crucial; his choice of visual concepts or pictorial motifs dynamically interacts with the viewer's artistic and religious awareness. As with the *Peasant Wedding Banquet*, Bruegel's inter-pictorial discourse not only mediates the religious narrative within everyday life, mixing the "sacred" with the "profane," but

[383] See Gideon O. Burton, "Silva Rhetoricae," http://humanities.byu.edu/rhetoric/silva.htm (January 31, 2007). Michel Jeanneret describes a similar process in the work of Montaigne, "The Renaissance and Its Ancients: Dismembering and Devouring," *Modern Language Notes*, vol. 110.5 (1995), 1043-1053.

also combines previous visual tradition with his own emerging artistic practice. As a result, the viewers of this visual conversation have to follow the interplay of that mediation, shifting focus back and forth from the surface of the painting to the model it references. It goes without saying that such visual and intellectual agility requires time and patience, a slow extrication of meaning through prolonged meditation on the painting, and assigns a dynamic role to the viewer. The beholder, therefore, is asserted as the judge not only of proper response to the painted subjects, but also of creative innovation in relation to artistic practice. The result is both the cultivation of the mind of the viewer as well as Bruegel's vernacular style.

Chapter Four:
To See Yourself within It: Bruegel's *Festival of Fools*

I.

The topics of blindness and self-awareness I discussed in relation to the *Peasant and Nest Robber* bring me to the focus of my fourth and final chapter, Bruegel's *Festival of Fools* (fig. 84). In addition, the practices of making and viewing works of art I have described for all of Bruegel's later peasant paintings are also helpful in thinking about this particular design. Nadine Orenstein argues for a late dating of the print, after the now lost drawing by Bruegel, based on the words *Aux quatre Vents* inscribed at the bottom center. This is the form of the publisher's address used by the widow of the print's publisher, Hieronymus Cock, following his death in 1570. Orenstein speculates the drawing was completed in the last years of Bruegel's life, during the same time he painted the peasant panels, and the print produced after his death.[384]

Although fairly subtle, the composition of the *Festival of Fools* stages a procession similar to a wagon play.[385] The crowd of lively characters enters from the

[384] Nadine Orenstein, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder* (2001), 251. See also, T. Riggs, "Bruegel and his Publisher," in O. von Simson and M. Winner (eds.), *Pieter Bruegel und seine Welt*, Berlin: Mann (1979), 165-174.

[385] Wagon plays were processional dramas that took place during *Ommegangen* (devotional processions) in the 1550s and 1560s. Rhetoricians conceived of wagon plays as didactic episodes that could morally edify and educate their audience. The plays utilized overt metaphors and personifications to create allegorical productions that focused on collective civic identity; Emily Peters, "*'Den gheheelen loop des weerelts'* (The whole course of the world): Printed Processions and the Theater of Identity in Antwerp during the Dutch Revolt," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Santa Barbara (2005), 151. Sheila Williams and Jean Jacquot also discuss Bruegel's *Festival of Fools* in the context of

left, beneath the trellised pergolas, and processes to the right, before dancing hand-in-hand and meandering their way into the background where the musicians provide music. The right side of the building through which they process is a gallery for viewing. On the far left side, two men support a makeshift carriage, made just visible by the handle they carry, which bears a bald-headed fool above their shoulders holding a ball before his gaze. At first sight, the collection of figures seems to be rather chaotically constructed; they engage in acrobatic manoeuvres, heads swivelled awkwardly on bodies and bodies piled on top of one another. In the foreground, multiple fools play a bowling game, while in the background people on a platform strum or bang various instruments. The figures are in full costume with hood and bells; they dance, exhibit bawdy gestures and participate in proverbial activities, examples of which I will discuss shortly. All of this is mentioned in the accompanying text below the image. The text reads, in translation, "You *sottebollen* (numbskulls), who are plagued with foolishness, / Come to the green if you want to go bowling, / Although one has lost his honor and another his money, / The world values the greatest *sottebollen*. // *Sottebollen* are found in all nations, / Even if they do not wear a fool's cap on their heads. / They have such grace in dancing that their foolish heads spin like tops. // The filthiest *sottebollen* shit everything away, / Then there are those who take others by the nose. / Some sell trumpets and the others spectacles / With which they deceive many nitwits. // Yet there are *sottebollen* who behave themselves wisely, / And taste the true sense of '*tSottebollen* (numbskulling) / Because they [who] enjoy folly in themselves / Shall best hit the pin with their *sottebollen*."[386]

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allegorical processions, but for different purposes; see "Ommegangs Anversois du Temps de Bruegel et de van Heemskerck," in *Les Fêtes de la Renaissance*, vol. 2, *Fêtes et Cérémonies au Temps de Charles Quint*, ed. Jean Jacquot, Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (1960), 359-388.

[386] Translation of the original text is adapted from Orenstein, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder* (2001), 252 and Keith Moxey, "Pieter Bruegel and *The Feast of Fools*," *Art Bulletin*, vol. LXIV, no.4 (1982), 640-646. "Ghy Sottebollen, die met ydelheyt, ghequelt=syt, / Compt al ter banen, die lust hebt om rollen, / Al wordet déen syn eere en dander t'gelt=quyt, / De weerelt die pryst, de grootste Sottebollen. // Men vint Sottebols, onder elcke nacie, / Al en draghen sy geen sotscappen, ophaeren cop./ Die int dansen heeben, al sulken gracie, / Dat hunnen Sottebol, drayet, ghelyck eenen top. // De vuylste Sottebols, lappent al duer de billen, / Dan synder, die d'een dander, mettennuefe vatten / De sulck, vercoopt trompen, en dander brillen, / Daer sy veel, Sottebollen mede verschatten. // Al synder Sottebols, die haer wysselyck draghen, / En van tSottenbollen, den rechten sin-smaken, / Om dat sy in hun selfs sotheyt hebben behagen / Sal hueren Sottebol alder best de pinraken."

In his discussion of this print, Keith Moxey argues that it does not represent an actual event, such as the celebration of the "Feast of Fools" which took place in several cities of Brabant during Bruegel's lifetime.[387] For one, Moxey explains, the park-like architectural setting bears little resemblance to the streets and alleyways in which the procession of fools must have taken place and, second, all the figures in the composition wear the costume of court fools instead of the varied and fantastic costumes worn in the ecclesiastical Feast of Fools. Rather than reflecting reality, argues Moxey, the picture represents an allegory of folly.[388] While this may be true, there is yet another contemporary, local event that this picture may be connected to, a play presented by the Diest chamber of rhetoric at the 1561 *Landjuweel* (drama festival) in Antwerp, titled "De Sottebollen."[389] In this drama, or "*factie*," not only is the setting for the action a bowling green, but the play also makes a similar pun on "heads" as the image and text of Bruegel's engraving, a similarity I will return to. If we take a closer

[387] Moxey "Pieter Bruegel and the *Feast of Fools*" (1982), 641-643. See also Thierry Boucquey, *Mirages de la Farce: Fête des fous, Bruegel et Molière*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing (1991), esp. 60-72 where he discusses the image as a representation of the world-upside-down, in the context of the inversion principle central to the Feast of Fools. The religious Feast of Fools was an institutionalized ritual that constituted an integral part of ecclesiastical life in the Southern Netherlands from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries. The festival, which was a characteristic part of the communal life of cathedral chapters, consisted in an inversion of the clerical hierarchy. The lower clergy took control of the cathedral and proceeded to hold mock services. J.C. Margolin, "Des lunettes et des homes, ou la satire des mal-voyants au XVIe siécle," *Annales, economies, sociétés, civilizations*, vol. 30 (1973), 375-393. For the history of the Feast of Fools as a European tradition, see E. Chambers, *The Medieval Stage*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903. On the festival of fools put on by rhetorical societies, see R. Marijnissen, "De Eed van Meester Oom. Een Voorbeeld van Brabantse Jokkernij uit Bruegels Tijd," in O. von Simson and M. Winner (ed.), *Pieter Bruegel und seine Welt*, Berlin: Mann (1979), 51-61.

[388] Moxey, "Feast of Fools" (1982), 641.

[389] Moxey also raises and dismisses this idea, with little justification; see Ibid., 643, n. 22. Jeroen Vandommele offers a concise description of the festival: In August of 1561, the chamber of Rhetoric *De Violieren*, connected to the Saint-Lucas guild of Antwerp (the guild of artists), organized the last '*Landjuweel*' of Brabant. This festival was the last one in a cycle of seven and is considered to be the largest and the most exuberant rhetorician festival in sixteenth-century Netherlands. Fourteen chambers of rhetoric came to Antwerp to compete against each other. There were a number of special prizes to win for different categories of the festival: there was an 'Entry' into Antwerp, similar to Royal Entries. There was the competition of the best 'farce-play' or *Esbattement*, the competition of the best 'morality-play' or *spel van zinne*, and there was a competition for best prologue. Apart from these three competitions, chambers could win prices for best celebration, for best '*tableau vivant,'* for best comic play and for the best 'jester'. The one with the best '*Esbattement*' was the official winner of the *Landjuweel* and was obliged to start the next cycle in their own hometown. http://www.rug.nl/let/onderzoek/onderzoekinstituten/icog/dissertaties/ summaries_2003-2004/vanDommele (January 31, 2007). Literature on the 1561 *Landjuweel* is extensive; see Elly Cockx-Indestege, W. Waterschoot, et al (eds.), *Uyt Ionsten Versaemt. Het landjuweel van 1561 te Antwerpen*. Brussel: Koninklijke Bibliotheek Albert I, 1994; E. van Autenboer, *Het Brabantse landjuweel der rederijkers (1515-1561)*, Middelburg: Merlijn, 1981; G.J. Steenbergen, *Het landjuweel van de rederijkers*, Leuven, 1950.

look at the actual make-up of *facties* in general, as well as the Diest presentation more specifically, it is highly likely that Bruegel's contemporary viewers would have viewed the *Festival of Fools* with this sort of event in mind.

During the Antwerp *Landjuweel*, and the smaller festival (*Haagspel*) held immediately afterwards, there were also prizes given for the best *factie*, or short allegorical play that was satirical or comic in nature. These plays usually took place in the streets and always ended in an invitation for the crowd to join the characters in an original song and dance created by the performing chamber of rhetoric.[390] Although the *factie* genre is not precisely defined, only seventeen examples are extant and all but one are from the 1561 *Landjuweel* or *Haagspel*, literary scholars have concluded a number of characteristics based on the sources. For example, the plays were not performed in a specific location in the Antwerp *Grote Markt*, as were the *Landjuweel* dramas, but took place as a lively procession around a wagon along the street. In this way, explains Bart Ramakers, the plays fit the processional character of the theatrical competition.[391] Also in contrast to the plays designed for the *Landjeweel*, there was no designated theme to be addressed. The invitation card for the competition stipulated only that the "street revue" should be funny and must be meaningful for the crowd. Usually, many characters appeared in the performance who often spoke only one line in the dialogue. Furthermore, the most typical characteristic was that the *factie* should end with a *dansliedje* (song to dance to).[392]

Of the sixteen *facties* from the 1561 *Landjuweel* and *Haagspel*, four address the subjects of fools and folly. In his description of the presentation by 's-Hertogenbosch at the *Landjuweel,* which addressed the spread of folly through the use of a hand cream, Ruud Ryckaert explains that the dialogue is a true storehouse of images of folly and gets its power not necessarily from a specific comical act or exchange, but from its rich

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[390] Bart Ramakers, "Epilooglieden, factieliederen, en de Brabantse connectie," in Frank Willaert (ed.) *Veelderhande liedekens: het Nederlandse lied tot 1600*, Leuven: Peeters (1997), 149-151 and Ruud Ryckaert, "Nu comt hier boven op desen waghen staen! De factie op het Antwerpse Landjuwel en Haagspel van 1561," *Spiegel der Letteren*, vol. 47, no. 4 (2005), 297-301.

[391] Ramakers, "Epilooglieden" (1997), 150.

[392] Ibid. One example is a brief description given in the "Charte der Rhetorijcken van dLandt-Iuvveel," from the 1561 *Landjuweel* in Antwerp: "Wie de beste Factie voort sal stellen, / Achter straten doende, met een vrolijck rellen, / Daer meest sins in besloten werdt sonderlinghen, / En recreatijuelijcst om vertellen, / Maer Schimp en Onhuescheyt moety buyten vellen, / Met een nieu dansliedeken om springhen […]" *Het Antwerpse Landjuweel van 1561*, with introduction and commentary by C. Kruyskamp, Antwerpen: De Nederlandsche Boekhandel (1962), xi.

symbolic language. He goes on to say that thanks to the "Bruegelesque attraction" of the language, it is not possible to miss the comic effect.[393]

The *factie* of *De Christusooghen van Diest* presents sixteen characters representing various vices and follies, called *hoofden*, led by *Thooft van alle Vreemde Hoofden* (head of all the strange heads).[394] The play is opened by the "head *hoofd*" who declares that the subject to be discussed involves everyone; therefore, all should be quiet and listen because with being silent one best acquires knowledge and insight. *Thooft vol Ghenuechten* (head full of pleasure) and *Thooft vol Sorghen* (head full of worries) must, along with their leader, decide who of the characters is allowed to become a member of their society and who is not welcome at the Antwerp festival and must leave the city. Other representatives include: *Thooft vol Keyen* (head full of stones), *Thooft vol Slaeps* (head full of sleep/laziness), *Thooft vol Amoreusheden* (head full of blind love), *Thooft vol Hoppen* (head full of drunkenness), *Thooft vol Devocien* (head full of hypocrisy)[395], *Thooft vol Pluymen* (head full of frivolity), and *Thooft vol Sotten* (head full of all-encompassing folly). The *factie* is a moralizing dialogue in which the "head *hoofd*" asks each character individually who they are. Each responds in turn by describing the folly they represent. In the majority of cases, the "head *hoofd*" replies to each character informing him of what he needs to do to cure himself. It becomes apparent by the end of the dialogue that each character is a representative of specific factions of the population that would have been present in the audience. Thus, the exchanges between the "head *hoofd*" and "head" of each type of folly are meant to be heard by the audience as if they themselves are speaking and being spoken to.[396]

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[393] Ryckaert, "De factie op het Antwerpse Landjuwel" (2005), 304.

[394] *Spelen van sinne* vol scone moralisacien vvtleggingen ende bediedenissen op alle loeflijcke consten […]:
ghespeelt met octroy der Con. Ma. binnen der stadt *van* Andtwerpen op dLantjuweel by die veerthien cameren *van* retorijcken die hen daer ghepresenteert hebben den derden dach Augusti int jaer ons heeren M.D.LXI: op die questie VVat den mensch aldermeest tot conste vervvect [...] Willem Silvius (1562), 363.

[395] "hypocrisy," the pretense of having a virtuous character or religious beliefs that one does not really possess, is not a direct translation of "*Devocien,"* but an interpretation based on the character's lines.

[396] In this sense, the presentational style of the *factie* is similar to morality plays. Presentational style refers to the particular intimacy between the players and the spectators, in which the players freely acknowledged and addressed the audience. Spectators often overtly participated in the central characters' drama, a character who stood in for them as a universal type. Peters, "Printed Processions and the Theater of Identity" (2005), 157. See also H. van Dijk, "Structure as a Mean's to Audience Identification in the Dutch 'rederijker' Drama," in M. Gosman and R. Walthaus (eds.), *European*

Likewise, Bruegel's *Festival of Fools* is also a storehouse of illustrations of folly, which the inscription below the image glosses. For example, two fools at the center of the composition pull each other's noses, enacting the Flemish proverb "to lead someone by the nose," meaning to lead someone astray or to deceive them.[397] Just in front and to the left of this pair are two figures representing the "world turned upside down"—one capers mid-somersault while the other shows his bare ass, an action meant to conjure up associations of excrement and defecation.[398] The trumpet-seller mentioned in the text is another reference to deceit. Moxey explains that the Flemish word for trumpet was derived from the French "trompe" which in turn drew its deceitful connotations from the verb "tromper," to trick. Although there is no trumpet-seller in Bruegel's image, it is likely that the man blowing a flute on the right of the composition is related to this passage. An engraving that is usually attributed to Bruegel, *The Dishonest Merchant* (ca. 1568, fig. 85), represents a man selling nets, trumpets, flutes and Jew's harps.[399] Since flutes are the visual equivalent to trumpets and since the sixteenth-century Flemish word "*fluten*," (present day: fluiten) "to flute," could also mean "to betray," Bruegel's flute player could have also been understood in the context of fraud or deceit.[400] Additionally, the presence of Jew's harps among the merchant's deceitful wares makes it likely that this instrument, which is played by a fool in the vicinity of the flute player, would have been viewed in a similar context.[401] A figure at the far right wields a pair of spectacles and may illustrate the spectacle-seller also mentioned in the text. If this is the case, then this figure too can be understood as a personification of deceit, since spectacles were a common symbol of blindness and deception, while the action of selling spectacles was associated with the fraudulent promise of improved sight.[402] On top of his head and on a badge, the man

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Theatre 1470-1600: Traditions and Transformations, Groningen: Egbert Forsten (1996), 113-117; Robert Potter, *The English Morality Play: Origins, History and Influence of a Dramatic Tradition*, London: Routledge (1975), 48.

[397] Jan Grauls, *Volkstaal en Volksleven* (1957), 103.

[398] Moxey, "Pieter Bruegel and the *Feast of Fools*" (1982), 643.

[399] This image was published among a set of proverb illustrations by Jan Wierix in 1568-1569, see Jacques Lavalleye, *Bruegel and Lucas van Leyden: Complete Engravings, Etchings and Woodcuts,* New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1967.

[400] Moxey, "Pieter Bruegel and the *Feast of Fools*" (1982), 640-641.

[401] Ibid.

[402] Ibid. See also D.G. Denery, *Seeing and Being Seen in the Later Medieval World: Optics, Theology and Religious Life*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

wears spectacles that are upside-down, possibly further indication of his deceptive enterprise. Finally, the importance of gestures in the picture can be seen in the so-called 'fig' gesture made by the fool standing in the foreground who holds an owl on his left arm. It was, and still is, a well-known gesture in the Netherlands and possesses obscene significance as a visual metaphor of the sex act.[403]

In the translation of the caption, I have retained the term "*sottebollen*," rather than using the English equivalent "numbskull," because it is important both for understanding the connection between image and text, as well as for recognizing the similar pun on "heads" that the print shares with the Diest *factie*. As I mentioned, on the far left side, two men support a makeshift carriage which bears a bald-headed fool above their shoulders. We can see that the group of fools in this section hold up balls in front of their eyes; the fool who is hoisted up gazes intently into his. The resemblance between the bald round head of the fool and the smooth round ball at which he gazes is striking; elsewhere in the picture, it is even possible to confuse one with the other. Scholars commenting on this similitude have recognized that the bowling game played by the fools in the foreground cleverly puns on the word *sottebollen*, which describes both the bald heads of the fools, or numbskulls, and the balls they play with. The Flemish word "*sot*" means "fool," while "*bol*" can mean either "ball" or "head." "*Sottebollen*" can therefore just as easily mean "foolish heads" as it can "fool's balls."[404] Therefore, the ball that the fool sitting on the carriage holds before his gaze is a representation of himself; the print represents this symbiosis between object and personal identity both visually and textually.

The names of the characters portrayed in the Diest *factie* play a similar kind of pun. For example, the first person to speak is *Thooft van* (of) *alle vreemde hoofden*, while each character presented after him is *Thooft vol* (full) […]. As a result, the spectator is led to consider each character as having a head full of the folly after which they are named, while at the same time being the head, or representative, of this type of folly that is present in the crowd of spectators.

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[403] For elaboration on these and other symbolic actions and gestures in the picture, see Moxey, "Pieter Bruegel and the *Feast of Fools*" (1982). See also Peter Hecht, *De Hollandse fijnschilders : van Gerard Dou tot Adriaen van der Werff*, Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum Amsterdam (1989), 208-211 (esp. n. 3).
[404] Moxey, "Pieter Bruegel and the *Feast of Fools*" (1982), 640.

Although it is by no means conclusive evidence, several elements in Bruegel's design correspond with *factie* presentations in general. Both are lively processions, similar to wagon plays, that take place in the street and end in dancing and music-making. Bruegel's image is a representation of fools that is both funny and meaningful, representing visual illustrations of proverbs, gestures or customs specific to the subject. And, as with the Diest play, a "head *hoofd*" is hoisted up on the wagon. Furthermore, as I will show in the remainder of this chapter, the viewer of the print, like the spectator of the play, is implicated in the folly represented through the pun on "heads" and the tools for play they carry in their hands.

In the following, I will build on my description of the *Festival of Fools* thus far and focus on interweaving analyses of certain aspects of the picture—architecture, actions of the fools and text—in order to show how Bruegel elaborates on the processional format, using architecture, figures and accompanying text to visually and intellectually fuse the world of the viewer and that of the picture. Specifically, I will explain how the bowling game incites the performance of interpretation as an exercise in overcoming blindness through the acquisition of self-knowledge.[405] Subsequently, I will discuss how Bruegel's allegory of folly not only resonates visually with contemporary *facties* but also depictions of allegorical processions. Although Bruegel's picture may have been viewed in the context of these vernacular plays, there

[405] Participation in such bowling games are also mentioned in Erasmus's *convivia*. In the "Sober Feast," the guests try to decide how to properly dedicate the garden where their feast will take place. Bartholinus's suggests, "You have playing boards and balls. We'll dedicate the garden with a game." Erasmus, *Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 40 (1997), 926. But, the staging of a philosophical or religious discussion within the context of a game is an exercise with a longer history. For a general discussion of this phenomenon, see Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*, trans. by Richard Francis Carrington Hull, London: Temple Smith, 1970. See the poem written by Anthonis de Roovere (1430-1482), "Gheestelijck den bal te slane," in J.J. Mak (ed.), *De Gedichten van Anthonis de Roovere*, Zwolle: W.E.J. Tjeenk Willink (1955), 278-281. A text by Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464) written in 1462, called *De ludo globi* (or *The Game of Spheres*), is another example. After pausing to rest from a type of bowling game, John, Duke of Bavaria, and the Cardinal engage in an extended dialogue about the way in which their game of spheres facilitates an understanding of divine concepts. The Cardinal explains in the opening section, "Indeed, I think that no honest game is entirely lacking in the capacity to instruct." After John appeals to the Cardinal to expand on the philosophy the bowling game represents, the Cardinal responds hesitantly, understanding the magnitude of the request, "I will do what you ask and sow in your noble minds some seeds of knowledge. If you receive and protect these seeds within yourselves, each of them will produce the fruit of light which is of great importance for that most desired self-knowledge." Nicholas of Cusa, *De Ludo Globi*, trans. by Pauline Moffit Watts, New York: Abaris Books (1986), fol. CLIIv. On the soul's journey as play in *De Ludo Globi*, see "The Journey of the Soul to God in Nicholas of Cusa's *De Ludo Globi*," in *Nicholas of Cusa in Search of God and Widsom*, eds. Gerald Christianson and Thomas M. Izbicki, Leiden: E.J. Brill (1991), 71-86.

are other pictorial elements that reveal a visual discourse with the practice of representing classical subjects in allegorical processions, particularly those of Maarten van Heemskerck. More precisely, the manner in which Bruegel portrays the procession of fools not only incorporates visual illustrations of local proverbs, gestures or customs specific to the subject, but also classical architecture and pictorial motifs that resemble, or play on, a type of image that, although not classical in nature, had been employed up to this point for depicting classical themes or royal entries. As a result, similar to the *Peasant Wedding Banquet* and *Peasant Dance*, as I have described them, Bruegel presents a local festivity in a form that was not only previously used for more lofty subject matter but also brings with it a certain mode, or habit, of viewing that would have informed the viewer's analysis and interpretation.

Before addressing these ideas, I first need to acknowledge the fact that I am discussing a print in much the same way that I previously analyzed Bruegel's panel paintings—two mediums that are entirely different. This is the case not only for the very different manner an artist would have approached the formal design of a print as opposed to a panel painting, it is also true for how, and in what context, a viewer would have engaged it.[406] In the inventory taken from the possessions of Cock's widow, Mayken Verhulst, after her death in 1601, the *Festival of Fools* was listed as "*Een plaete van de Sottebollen*"; she had thirty-one impressions of it.[407] Unlike panel paintings, prints were mass produced and much more readily available to a broader audience. Therefore, it is more difficult to delimit the type and characteristics of the print's contemporary viewer, as well as its viewing context, than it is, for example, a painting like the *Peasant Wedding Banquet*. As a result, it is impossible to discuss this picture within a single context, such as the *convivium* tradition, as I have tried to do for Bruegel's paintings.[408]

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[406] On the social conditions of print culture in a single city, see Jan van der Stock, *Printing Images in Antwerp. The Introduction of Printmaking in a City Fifteenth Century to 1585*, Rotterdam: Sound and Vision Interactive, 1998.
[407] Nadine Orenstein, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder* (2001).
[408] On the multiple, distinct viewerships of prints, see Jan van der Stock, "Ambiguous intentions, multiple interpretations: An 'other' look at printed images from the sixteenth century," in *Prentwerk, 1500-1700, Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, vol. 52 (2001), 79-99; for a particular example of these complexities of reception in the work of Goltzius, see James Bloom, "Mastering the Medium: Reference and Audience in Goltzius's Print of the *Circumcision*," in *Prentwerk, 1500-1700, Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, vol. 52 (2001), 79-99.

However, in the sixteenth century, we know that prints and drawings became autonomous works of art—bought, sold, framed and, more importantly for my argument, held in the viewer's hands and discussed as art objects in their own right. In fact, it has been argued that by the mid-sixteenth century, prints could have influenced painting and artistic invention as much as the other way around.[409] One of the effects of the constantly expanding corpus of images in print during the sixteenth century was that artists had available to them a vast array of pictorial examples upon which they could draw in producing their works.[410] Printed images were often palimpsests of stylistic, compositional and iconographic references. As artists began producing images that imitated the style of previous art, or quoted iconographic details, or borrowed compositional motifs, viewers developed corresponding skills in recognizing citations and subtle resonances among images.[411]

Similar to the *Festival of Fools*, other later works after Bruegel, such as the figures in *Summer* (1568, fig. 86) and the battle scene of *The Fight of the Piggy Banks and Strongboxes* (after 1570, fig. 87), incorporate Italianate style or characteristics from more lofty representations of history. For example, Kavaler has shown that for his allegorical representation of *The Fight of the Piggy Banks and Strongboxes*, Bruegel mediates pictorial elements common for heroic battle scenes in woodcut illustrations and tapestries; as a result, he argues that the picture would have been viewed in relation to these images and understood in ironic terms, as a "mock-

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[409] On the development of prints and drawings as works of art, see Nadine M. Orenstein, "Images to Print: Pieter Bruegel's Engagement with Printmaking," in Nadine M. Orenstein (ed.), *Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Drawings and Prints*, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art (2001), 41-56; William W. Robinson and Martha Wolff, "The Function of Drawings in the Netherlands in the Sixteenth Century," in John Oliver Hand, et al (eds.), *The Age of Bruegel: Netherlandish Drawings in the Sixteenth Century*, Washington: National Gallery of Art (1986), 25-40; Larry Silver, *Graven Images: The Rise of Professional Printmakers in Antwerp and Harlem, 1540-1640*, Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1993; David Landau and Peter Parshall, *The Renaissance Print, 1470-1550*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994; R. Chartier, *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France*, trans. by L.C. Cochrane, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987.

[410] See Timothy Riggs, *Hieronymus Cock, Printmaker and Publisher*, New York: Garland Press, 1977.

[411] Mark Meadow, "Introduction," *Prentwerk, 1500-1700, Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, vol. 52 (2001), 9-10. Whereas historians of literature now routinely speak of the 'intertextuality' of humanistic writing of the period, which took myriad strands of reference and citation and rewove them into brilliant new textual tapestries, we might here begin to understand the broad dissemination of images through the medium of print to facilitate and heighten (although not to create) an equivalent phenomenon of 'intervisuality.' Meadow, 10. As in my discussion of Bruegel's paintings, these habits of viewing can be likened to the concept of textual 'sub-reading' introduced by Thomas Greene; see n. 267.

heroic."[412] Although the medium is different from his later peasant scenes and the audience more broad, I will show how Bruegel's *Festival of Fools* continues the innovative artistic practices I have discussed thus far for his paintings. This picture participates in a complex web of visual reference and resonance, transgressing categories such as Italian and Northern, Classical and Modern. It is assembled in such a way that it would have appealed to, even challenged, the analytical and interpretive capabilities of those educated and artistically aware viewers whom we know made up part of Bruegel's audience.[413]

II.

The text below the engraving consists of four separate quatrains progressing from left to right. The first three describe various acts of folly, while the final quatrain instructs how the bowling game may be better played; this quatrain is conveniently located directly below the pin to be hit. This progression from left to right is visually highlighted by four figures isolated on the front edge of the picture: the fool in the far left bottom corner who attempts to bowl between his legs, aiming away rather than toward the pin; the fool marching to the right while thumbing his nose, a gesture of derision and mockery;[414] the fool standing with his back to the viewer, looking in on the festivities and holding an owl aloft; and the man in the far right bottom corner who plays the flute and kneels down to point at the target of the bowling game, the small isolated pin. This progression of fools, each standing directly above a stanza of the text, will become more clear as I discuss the intricate relationship between text and image and the process of interpretation which leads the viewer from one state of awareness to another, from total blindness (or self-unawareness), to the observation of foolish acts, to self-reflection and thence to the object of the game.

Returning to the "head fool" elevated on the carriage, who holds a ball before his gaze, it is important to point out that this motif is also common in allegorical

[412] Kavaler, *Parables of Order and Enterprise* (1999), 98-105.
[413] On the relationship between Bruegel and humanists of his day, see n. 65.
[414] Moxey, "Pieter Bruegel and the *Feast of Fools*" (1982), 643.

processions in which an attribute of the stately subject being celebrated is held before his eyes. A particularly poignant example is Cornelis Bos's engraving after Heemskerck's *Triumph of Bacchus* (1543, fig. 60 and 88, 89), in which a satyr standing behind Bacchus holds a mask before the god's face. Interestingly, as with the ball and fool, the mask replicates Bacchus's identity.[415] The same is true for the figure of Pride, who is perched atop a wagon in one of the nine allegorical processions Heemskerck produced in 1564, the *Cycle of the Vicissitudes of Human Affairs*; a series that replicates almost exactly the iconography of the wagon play, or "interlude," presented at the *Ommegang* (devotional procession) that took place in Anwerp in 1561 (fig. 90).[416] Here, crowned Pride holds a convex mirror before her gaze which shows the reflection of her face.

A detail in Bruegel's *Everyman* or *Elck* (1558, fig. 91) sheds further light on this particular motif of the fool and figure of Pride. In the foreground, Elck wears glasses and stumbles through worldly possessions, searching unsuccessfully for self-knowledge.[417] Likewise, in the left background, a framed picture within the picture shows Niemant (No One), dressed in fool's garb, sitting amidst a collection of similarly assembled objects and holding up a convex mirror that reflects his face. The framed picture also bears a text stating that "No one knows himself" (NIEMAT-EN-KENT-HE[M]-SELVE[N]). Bret Rothstein explains that although Niemant's gaze into

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[415] Although many scholars have simply stated that this motif refers to ancient Attic drama, Rainald Grosshans explains that the Bacchus mask should not only be understood in the sphere of theatre but also as a common attribute of Dionysian mystery cults. See Rainald Grosshans, *Maerten van Heemskerk* (1980), 127. A similar comparison can be made to one of Bruegel's earlier paintings, *Battle Between Carnival and Lent* (1559). Center stage is given to two processions in conflict, each led by the personifications of their cause—a fattened participant of Carnival who rides a barrel and is crowned with a pie versus an emaciated representation of Lent who is pulled forward by a monk and nun and is crowned with a bee hive.

[416] *The New Holstein Dutch & Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts 1450-1700. Maerten Van Heemskerck*, part I (1993) & part II (1994), eds. I. M. Veldman and G. Luijten, vol. 37, Roosendaal: Koninklijke van Poll (1993), cat. 482-490. Sheila Williams and Jean Jacquot were the first to establish this connection; see "Ommegangs Anversois du Temps de Bruegel et de van Heemskerck" (1960).

[417] The Latin inscription below the picture reads in translation, "No one does not seek his own advantage everywhere, no one does not seek himself in all that he does, no one does not look everywhere for private gain. This one pulls, that one pulls, all have the same love of possession" (*Nemo non quærit passim sua commoda, Nemo / Non qu[a]erit sese' cunctis in rebus agendis, // Nemo non inhiat privatis undique lucris, / Hic trahit, ille trahit, cunctis amor unus habendi est*). Elck and his search for knowledge and goods was treated often in Antwerp's 1561 *Landjuweel* and the city's 1561 *Ommegang*. Orenstein, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder* (2001), 168. See also, Bret Rothstein, "The Problem with Looking at Pieter Bruegel's *Elck*," *Art History*, vol. 26, no. 2 (April 2003), 143-173; Kavaler, *Parables of Order and Enterprise* (1999), esp. 77-110; Müller, *Das Paradox als Bildform* (1999).

the mirror seems to be self-examination, his fool's outfit, combined with his proud posture and the material accoutrements surrounding him, recalls the vice and folly of *vanitas*. Rather than representing self-knowledge, both Niemant and Elck participate in the opposite exercise—exploration of the material world—and, therefore, communicate willful ignorance, or spiritual blindness. Their activity represents more profound failures outside of the image, Rothstein argues, since the viewer also searches for meaning within a material object.[418]

The theme of identity, as expressed in the Delphic oracle "know thyself," was particularly important for Bruegel's sixteenth-century educated viewers, numerous variations of which can be found in proverbs, maxims and Christian commentaries. Self-knowledge was a prerequisite for the acquisition of wisdom, and the revelation that made self-knowledge possible was that humankind is foolish.[419] Whereas, today, calling anyone in any circumstance a "fool" is always perceived as an insult, in the early Modern period the term is much more complex. A major component of the semantic field of folly is truth and another is wisdom.[420] For example, while the court fool was seen as someone without intellect, unable to think for himself, it was this very characteristic that made him the perfect receptacle, or mediator, of divine wisdom; having no intelligence himself, he could be depended upon to transmit in undistorted form what he received from above.[421] It is only through embracing one's foolish state that the acquisition of wisdom becomes a possibility. Through a play with paradox or

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[418] Rothstein, "Pieter Bruegel's *Elck*" (2003), 149-150.

[419] See Müller, *Das Paradox als Bildform* (1999), 66, 70-71, where he builds on the Erasmian idea that self-knowledge is the noblest form of knowledge in general.

[420] Generally speaking, a semantic field is a grouping of words which are associated or which define each other. Important to note is that these fields shift over time. See Trevor Donald, "The Semantic Field of 'Folly' in Proverbs, Job, Psalms and Ecclesiastes," *Vetus Testametum*, vol. 13 (July, 1963), 285-292. As Robert Weimann explains, this understanding of folly is in stark contrast to the orthodox medieval tradition of folly which posited a remarkable degree of fixity in its representational strategies. Weimann offers Sebastian Brant's *Ship of Fools*, first published in 1494, as an example in which folly was identified with sin or insanity. Brant's depiction of 112 types of fools and folly, who journey aboard an imaginary ship down the Rhine, is an encyclopedia of vice and foolishness designed to reassert authoritative norms of behavior in a highly stratified vision of late Medieval society where the dominant repertoire of social values was not in question; R. Weiman, *Authority and Representation in Early Modern Discourse*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press (1996), 136. See also Barbara Swain, *Fools and Folly During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1932.

[421] Florence M. Weinberg, *The Wine and the Will: Rabelais' Bacchic Christianity*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press (1972), 54-56. See also Robert Klein, "Le theme du fou et l'ironie humaniste," in *La forme et l'intelligible*, Paris: Gallimard (1970), 433-450. On the ecstatic nature of divine folly, see M.A. Screech, *Erasmus: Ecstasy and the Praise of Folly*, London: Penguin Books, 1980.

irony, especially in theater and literature involving fools, a slippage occurs between wisdom and folly.

The idea is biblical. The apostle Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 3: 18, "Do not deceive yourselves. If you think that you are wise in this age, you should become fools so that you may become wise." In the first section of the *Imitation of Christ*, one of the most well-known books in the sixteenth century, Thomas á Kempis asserts that, "If you think that you know many things and have great learning, then know for certain that there are many more things you do not know. So with true wisdom you may not think yourself learned, but ought rather to confess your ignorance and folly."[422] Sebastian Brant echoes this sentiment in the prologue of his widely read book, *The Ship of Fools* (1500): "With caution everyone should look / To see if he's in this my book / And who thinks not will say that he / Of wand and fool's cap may be free. / Who thinks he is not affected / To wise men's doors be he directed, / There let him wait until mayhap / From Frankfurt I can fetch a cap."[423] Donald Verene explains that Brant offers a way of self-discovery. The reader is to look within the book, to read each of its verses and study its woodcuts and encounter a mirror in which the reader can examine the reflection of his or her foolish soul and gain self-knowledge. Wisdom is attained through the recognition of folly and the self in its foolish condition.[424]

Similarly, in the *Praise of Folly*, another popular book during this period, Erasmus uses paradox to play with traditional cultural ideas of folly, for instance, that it is something simply to be avoided.[425] Beginning within a classical frame of reference, referring to antique sources and values, Erasmus makes a survey of human follies, including those of the reader. But, he amends this process, sporadically at first and more consistently towards the end, by weaving a Christian subtext into the discussion of worldly folly. His survey culminates in an overwhelmingly Christian paradox—the ultimate folly of Christ's sacrifice, which is actually the greatest wisdom. According to Erasmus, a fool is any human being deprived of reason—the stupid,

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[422] Thomas á Kempis, *Imitation of Christ*, New York: Dorset Press (1927), 8.
[423] Sebastian Brant, *The Ship of Fools*, translation by Edwin H. Zeydel, New York: Columbia University Press (1944), 61. First published in Flemish in Paris in 1500 by G. Marchand.
[424] Donald P. Verene, "Folly as a Philosophical Idea," in N. Georgeopoulos and Michael Heim (eds.), *Being Human in the Ultimate: Studies in the Thought of John M. Anderson,* Amsterdam: Rodopi (1995), 249.
[425] Erasmus, *Praise of Folly* (1993).

ignorant and mad. In his letter to the Corinthians, upon which the primary insight of Erasmus's book is based, Paul explains that Christ's willingness to suffer and die on the cross, despite his omniscience and omnipotence, being fully human yet fully divine, qualifies him for this status without question.[426] Erasmus' vacillation between ignorant wisdom and wise folly stages the reader's ability to recognize his or her participation in both, thereby creating a distinction between an ignorant fool and a wise fool and highlighting the role of self-knowledge in progressing from one to the other.

With this in mind, I would like to raise important questions about Bruegel's *Festival of Fools*, especially in the context of the final four phrases of the inscription. What exactly does it mean to "taste the true sense of '*t Sottebollen*?" Is this referring specifically to the act of bowling? If *sottebollen* refers both to the heads of the fools as well as to the balls they play with, how, in the last phrase, does one hit the pin with his head (mind)? What judgment is to be made about the triumphant fool holding a ball to his eyes? Finally, how does recognizing folly in oneself better equip one to play the game of bowling?

Just as there is much to be seen and discussed in this procession of figures from left to right, there are equally interesting, if not altogether bizarre, elements of the background architectural (mis-) construction that are integral for the print's overall visual effect. It has only been briefly noted that the perspective of the portal on the left and the round classical temple-like construction on the right background are completely askew. However, what remains a question is the role these "errata" might play when seen in concert with the revelries portrayed in the foreground (or if, in fact, they are errata at all). This bizarre architectural setting only intensifies the sense of playfulness and mystery. The whimsical buildings seem to be as acrobatic as the figures; the enlarged temple, especially with its double tiers of round arches on the interior, does not represent an actual building, rather it is an amalgamation of several.

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[426] In Corinthians, Paul often explains that men must become fools for Christ's sake and commanded that those who are considered wise by the world should become fools in order that they may be truly wise. The literature on Christian folly as illustrated by Erasmus is extensive. See, for example, Screech, *Erasmus: Ecstasy and the Praise of Folly* (1980); Christine Christ-von Wedel, "Das *Lob der Torheit* des Erasmus von Rotterdam im Spiegel der spätmittelalterlichen Narrenbilder und die Einheit des Werkes," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, vol. 78 (1987), 24-36. Barbara Könneker, *Wesen und Wandlung der Narrenidee im Zeitalter des Humanismus: Brant, Murner, Erasmus*, Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GMBH, 1966; Walter Kaiser, *Praisers of Folly*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963.

Equally interesting is the stylistic eclecticism represented by a Flemish country house in the center background connected to a classical domed building resembling the Pantheon, but with an arcade curving in the wrong direction.[427] The strange design of the portal on the left with vines growing up its trellis goes far beyond lackadaisical draughtsmanship; it required calculation to construct such a twisted arch whose apex intersects with the roofline of the building.

Bruegel's conspicuous disregard for representing the buildings in a consistent perspective—or better, his regard for creating inconsistent or multiple perspectives—is puzzling. This is the case especially if we compare this design with similar buildings in other works by, or after, Bruegel; for example, the trellised archway on the left in Bruegel's drawing of *Spring* (1565, fig. 92) and the domed circular building with classical pilasters in the right background of an engraving representing *Temperance* (1560, fig. 93). Take also the perspectival norm specific to an artist such as Hans Vredeman de Vries (1527-1606), who was a contemporary of Bruegel and specialized in illusionistic architectural backgrounds.[428] An etching from his series of the *History of Daniel*, part of Gerard de Jode's *Thesaurus biblicus* of 1579 (fig. 94), shows a round temple-like building with numerous columns situated in the right background behind the golden statue constructed by order of Nebuchadnezzar. In this image, the scene is designed in such a way that the viewer looks down on the events. Consequently, Vredeman portrays the building in adherence to a perspective scheme in which the bottom half of the structure—below eye level—is seen as if from above. Bruegel would have been well acquainted with Vredeman's work through their mutual cooperation with the publisher Hieronymus Cock. However, in Bruegel's design a columnar structure similar to the round temple-like building, and in the same compositional location, defies the example presented by Vredeman. Its clam-like assemblage portrays the building as if seen simultaneously from above and from below.

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[427] The phrase "stylistic eclecticism" is discussed in an article by Alina A. Payne, "Architects and Academies: Architectural Theories of *imitatio* and the Debates on Language and Style," in *Architecture and Language*, eds. G. Clarke and P. Crossley, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2000), 118-133 and 195-202.

[428] On the work of Vredeman, see *Tussen Stadspaleizen en Luchtkastelen: Hans Vredeman de Vries en de Renaissance*, Heiner Borggrefe, Thomas Fusenig, Barbara Uppenkamp (eds.), Amsterdam: Ludion (2002), 11. Christopher Heuer, "The City Rehearsed: Architecture, Rhetoric, and Print in the Arts of Hans Vredeman de Vries," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2003.

Bruegel employs versions of other classical buildings in the center background of the picture. In a design for the *Massacre of the Innocents* (1565, fig. 95), Frans Floris incorporates Roman architecture as a background for the *historia*. On the left side, a villa-like building surmounted by a balustrade recedes into the distance. The rusticated wall is evenly divided by niches and framed by columns. The end of the building connects to a temple-like structure with a domed roof. In the center background of Bruegel's *Festival of Fools*, we see a similar, albeit distorted version of such a building; its wall is divided by niches and columns and connected to a domed structure at one end. It could be said that Bruegel's architectural construction does not adhere to a consistent perspective, or, put another way, is designed to represent multiple, even conflicting, points of view. Considering the foolish activities for which they serve as a backdrop, these "awry views" of the world seem thematically appropriate.

Classical decorum was central to Renaissance theories of behavior, literature and art and governed the harmony (or disjunction) between form and content in both art and literature. For Vitruvius, it was a guide for the architect's aesthetic judgment. The architect, like the orator, has to take decorum as the first consideration in his designs, which must be made to fit the occasion and character of the work. Thus decorum functions as a regulating factor in architectural design. It brings with it a concern for the unity of content, form and purpose.[429] For Vredeman and Floris, incorporating classical architecture into their skillful depictions of lofty historical events was, in part, an effort to adhere to this practice.

Heemskerck's representations of allegorical processions incorporate the same standard. For example, in 1565 the artist designed a series of six illustrations to represent the *Triumphs of Petrarch*. In his design he seems to select monuments which can support the central notions in Petrarch's poems.[430] In the *Triumph of Chastity* (fig.

[429] On decorum and architecture, see Ingrid D. Rowland's introduction to her translation of Vitruvius, *Vitruvius: Ten Books on Architecture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. See also Alina A. Payne, *The Architectural Treatise in the Italian Renaissance: Architectural Invention, Ornament, and Literary Culture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

[430] See *The New Holstein Dutch & Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts 1450-1700. Maerten Van Heemskerck*, *The Triumphs of Petrarch*, ca. 1565, Philips Galle (engraver), plates 491-496, 173-177. For a study on the possible connection between Petrarch's Triumphs and Bruegel's *Triumph of Death*, see Helene Verougstraete, "Bruegel et Pétrarque: une évocation de Laure dans le Triomphe de la Mort de Pieter Bruegel l'Ancien?," in Marco Ross, et al (eds.), *Studi di storia dell 'arte in onore di Maria Luisa Gatti Perer*, Milano: Vita e Pensiero (1999), 247-251.

96), Heemskerck shows the chariot with the allegorical figures, a motif in concordance with the poem. The circular temple in the left background—which is raised on a flight of four stairs, supported by a colonnade of Corinthian columns and crowned with a low dome—is similar to several versions of the Temple of Vesta that were reproduced in the Netherlands during the sixteenth century, including Heemskerk himself (fig. 97).[431] Appropriately, chastity was particularly associated with the Temple of Vesta, where the vestal virgins consecrated to a life of chastity guarded the sacred flame. And in the poem Petrarch himself singles out the Vestas as examples of chastity. In the *Triumph of Fame*, Heemskerck depicts, appropriately, a version of the Coliseum and columns with spiral friezes resembling the one of Trajan.[432] In the *Triumph of Time*, it is the condition of the monuments, ruined and overgrown, which conveys the notion. The same is true for his *Cycle of the Vicissitudes of Human Affairs*. The eclectic architecture Heemskerck presents in the background of each procession also correlates with the subject honored. In the *Triumph of Pride*, large sepulchres, pyramids, a triumphal arch and, on the left, the tower of Babel decorate the backdrop.[433] Behind War in the fifth plate, plundered, burning cities and harassed travellers are portrayed, while in the image of Peace there are well-tilled fields and orderly cities. In other words, Heemskerck employs background architecture in its capacity to illustrate ideas.

One might think, then, that Bruegel's combination of an Italian, classicist architectural backdrop and foolish revelries, which illustrate various local gestures and proverbial activities and far from a lofty *historia*, is a violation of such artistic regulations. However, Bruegel adheres to decorum as much as Vredeman, Floris and Heemskerck. The unique bowl-shaped roof of the temple on the right is especially intriguing and Bruegel's viewers could have associated it with the design of the Vesta Temple, as in Heemskerck's *Triumph of Chastity*. In Bos's rendition of Heemskerck's

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[431] Heemskerck's temple of the Vestas is also similar to the reconstruction which Pietro Valeriano published in *Hieroglyphica;* Pierio Valeriano, *Hieroglyphica. Sive de Sacris Aegyptiorum literis Comentarii*, Basilea 1556 and 1567.

[432] In the sixteenth century, the Column of Trajan was specifically perceived as a symbol of Glory. Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*, published in Rome in 1593, and republished in 1603 with illustrations, standardized the column as an emblem of "Sublimità della Gloria." Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia*, P. Buscaroli (ed.), Torino: Fògola (1986), 432-434. See Victor Plahte Tschudi, "The Rhetoric of Roman Monuments: Observations on an engraving by Maarten van Heemskerck," *Nordlit*, no. 6 (www.hum.uit.no/nordlit/6/tschudi.html#_ftn10, January 27, 2007).

[433] Ibid.

Bacchus, a similarly large, round temple is located behind the procession at the right. Rather than referring to chastity, the sacred structure has been decorated with the accoutrements of a bacchanal and recast as a space dedicated to the worship of Bacchus. Similarly, Bruegel's bacchanal of folly incorporates a similar temple design but amends it so that a large open area is in the middle where we see two running figures. As an echo of, or emphasis on, this playful atmosphere, the double tiers of rounded archways added to the interior of the building resonate, and could have been viewed in association, with the outside of the Roman Coliseum or Arena of Verona (fig. 98), structures in which competitions were the focus of entertainment.[434] Here, it seems, we have a temple remodeled to honor and accommodate fool's games.

In terms of the fantastic perspective, Bruegel also adheres to classical decorum, but now in a witty, even paradoxical manner. His Roman, yet mis-formed, structures are, in fact, completely appropriate; that is to say, when seen in concert with the ridiculous activities of the festival of fools in the foreground, he has constructed buildings that seem correspondingly and completely foolish. The "perspective" of the buildings corresponds with the "perspective" of the fools.[435] As a result, the play with,

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[434] Reproductions of the Temple of Vesta, various arenas and the Roman Coliseum circulated among artists and were portrayed in painting and print in the North (such as those of Gossaert, Heemskerck and Bos) from the time artists began to sojourn to Italy at the beginning of the sixteenth century. See for example Hermann Egger and Christian Hülsen, *Die römischen Skizzenbücher von Maarten van Heemskerck: im Königlichen Kupferstichkabinett zu Berlin*, 2 vols., Berlin: Königlichen Museen, 1913; Leon Preibisz, *Martin van Heemskerck: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Romanismus in der niederländischen Malerei des XVI. Jahrhunderts*, Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1911. On the use of composite architecture as political and aesthetic statements, such as the cultivation of civic identity and the revival of classicism, see Peter Sharratt, "The Imaginary City of Bernard Salomon," in *Intellectual Life in Renaissance Lyon: Proceedings of the Cambridge Lyon Colloquium*, Cambridge: Cambridge French Colloquia (1993), 33-48 and "The Image of the Temple: Bernard Salomon, Rhetoric and the Visual Arts," in *Rhetoric, Rhétoriqueurs, Rederijkers*, ed. Jelle Koopmans, et al., Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen (1995), 247-268; Margaret M. McGowan, *Ideal Forms in the Age of Ronsard*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985. Since both of these essays discuss visual culture in Lyon during the mid-sixteenth century, it is important to point out that scholars have speculated that Bruegel travelled in France and, specifically, Lyon. Possible evidence is found in the inventory of the miniaturist Giulio Clovio, in which there is "un quadro di Leon di Francia a guazzo di mano di Pietro Brugole,"where "Leon di Francia" is generally taken to be Lyon in France; see Hessel Miedema, *Karel van Mander: The Lives of the Illustrious Netherlandish and German Painters*, 6 vols., Davaco: Doornspijk (1996), vol. 3, 257.

[435] Reindert Falkenburg has made a similar argument for the relationship between the theme of the painting, the construction of figures, and the design of buildings in the work of Pieter Aertsen, particularly his depiction of peasants; see, for example, Falkenburg, "Pieter Aertsens *Alter Marktverkäufer*" (2006). For a discussion of the relation between Doric order and human figure in Pieter Aertsen's *Kitchen Maid* in Brussels, see Falkenburg, "Pieter Aertsen's *Kitchen Maid* in Brussels" (2004). For a seminal discussion on Aertsen and artistic errata, see Falkenburg, "Alter Einoutus. Over de aard en herkomst van Pieter Aertsens stilleven-conceptie," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek,* vol.

or thematizing of, perspective stages the ability of the viewer to consider the design of the buildings as a pun on foolishness.

Another revealing motif significantly located in the center foreground is the fool who stands at the edge of the crowded scene, his back to the viewer, looking in on the festivities. An owl is perched on his raised left arm, its gaze directed toward the viewer. In spite of the fact that the owl is centrally placed, it is difficult to see because of the revelry surrounding it. The owl has many different connotations. While in Antiquity the bird was a symbol for wisdom, in the early Modern northern European visual tradition it was generally associated with evil and often used specifically to refer to blindness.[436] An owl positioned in this way, so directly gazing at the viewer, resembles a similar depiction in an engraving representing the extraction of the stone of madness, the so-called *Dean of Renaix*, previously attributed to Bruegel but now assigned to one of his many followers (fig. 99). In Bruegel's day, folk stories explained that foolish people had stones in their heads. Thus, the operation that removed the stone from an individual's head, a popular subject in sixteenth-century art, literature and theatre, was supposed to be a cure for folly.[437] In the picture, we see multiple occasions of the stone of folly being removed from foreheads. In the center, an owl perched on the back of a chair faces the viewer. To the left, a man carries what seems to be a tonsured monk on his back. Although it seems as if this man is simply trying to keep his balance, upon closer observation we can see that he is straining to stretch his left arm towards the owl in order to hold next to it the hat in his hand. This motif, set within a narrative scene of fools, resonates with a type of "owl's mirror" that

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40 (1989), 41-66. See also Georgia Clarke and Paul Crossley, *Architecture and Language: Constructing Identity in European Architecture, c. 1000-1650*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000; A. Payne, *The Architectural Treatise in the Italian Renaissance* (1999), esp. 113-143; J. Onians, *Bearers of Meaning. The Classical Orders in Antiquity, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, Princeton, N.J., 1988; J. Rykwert, *The Dancing Column. On Order in Architecture*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996.

[436] Moxey, "Feast of Fools" (1982), 643. See also Paul Vandenbroeck, "Bubo significans. Die Eule als Sinnbild von Schlechtigkeit und Torheit, vor allem in der niederländischen und deutschen Bilddarstellung und bei Jheronimus Bosch," *Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerpen*, Jaarboek (1985), 19-135; Paul Paszkiewicz, "Nocturnal bird of wisdom: symbolic functions of the owl in emblems," in *Bulletin du Musée national de Varsovie*, vol. 23 (1982), 56-84; Beryl Rowland, *Birds With Human Souls*, Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1978; Karl Schottenloher, "Die Eule im Buchschmuck des 16. Jahrhunderts," in *Reallexikon zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte*, vol. 6 (1973), 267-322.

[437] Orenstein, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder* (2001), 194.

was well known in the sixteenth century and specifically associated with the subject of the fool.

For example, Tijl's *Uilenspiegel*, a story about a peasant folk hero, was one of the most popular vernacular works in sixteenth-century northern Europe. The name *uilenspiegel* means "owl's mirror" and alludes to an old adage, "One sees one's own faults no more clearly than an owl sees its own ugliness in a looking glass." In the folk story, Tijl is presented as a free-spirited trickster or fool, sometimes innocent and other times evil, who thumbed his nose at the hypocrisy of society, played practical jokes on his contemporaries and held his "owl's mirror" up for their self-reflection. The book, published in Antwerp by Michiel van Hoochstraten in ca. 1525, is a collection of loosely related vignettes describing the adventures of this figure and includes ca. 85 woodcut illustrations.[438] One straightforward example shows an owl perched on top of a mirror (fig. 100). Likewise, an illustration from the title page of the high German *Uilenspiegel* (fig. 101), shows a man sitting on his horse, his arms raised above his head with an owl sitting on his right hand and a mirror held in his left. What exactly does this motif, an owl coupled with a mirror, mean? In his study, "Ulenspiegels spiegel in de zestiende eeuw," Paul Verhuyck explains:

> The owl was first the bird of Minerva and associated with wisdom, but in the 15th and 16th centuries it began to be associated more with foolishness and darkness [blindness]. To fools, Tiel added a revealing mirror in the tradition of Socrates' motto "Know Thyself." An *ulenspiegel*, or owl's mirror, is the fool who unmasks the folly of the world; as such it belongs to the tradition of the jester who is allowed to speak the truth under the protective mask of conventional madness.[439]

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[438] The first collection of stories was produced in Germany around 1500. L. Debaene argues for an earlier dating of the Antwerp publication, between 1515-1520; see "De betekenis van het Oudste Vlaamse Volksboek van Ulenspieghel," in H. Servotte, et al. (ed.), *Hulde-Album Prof. dr. J.F. Vanderheyden*, Leuven: N.V. Vonksteen te Langemark (1970), 81-89. See also Vriesema, "Eulenspiegel-Drucke in niederländischer Sprache van ca. 1520 bis 1830," *Quaerendo*, vol. 32, no. 4 (2002), 3-59.

[439] Paul E.R. Verhuyck, "Ulenspiegels spiegel in de zestiende eeuw," in *Oog in oog met de Spiegel*, ed. Nico J. Brederoo, et al., Amsterdam: Aramith Uitgevers (1988), 198-199 (my translation). See also, J.D. Janssens, *Uilenspiegel : de wereld op zijn kop*, Leuven: Davidsfonds, 1999; Marnix Beyen, *Held voor alle werk: de vele gedaanten van Tijl* Uilenspiegel, Antwerpen Baarn: Houtekiet, 1998; Katrin Streubel, *Die Eulenspiegelfigur in der deutschen Literatur der frühen Neuzeit und der Aufklärung*, Köln: Hundt, 1988; Loek Geeraedts, *Het volksboek van Ulenspieghel*, Kapellen: DNB/Uitgeverij Pelckmans, 1986; Paul Vandenbroeck, "Bubo significans" (1985).

An "owl's mirror" is a mirror held up to someone who is blind to the fact that he or she is foolish, evil, ignorant, etc. The owl, associated with these very characteristics, located next to a mirror is the true reflection of the person standing in front of the mirror. The motif functions to help the viewer become self-aware of his or her true nature. By confronting the viewer with a reciprocal gaze—a gaze connoting foolishness and blindness—the owl coupled with a mirror in the *Ulenspiegel* story functions to force the beholder to see himself as an owl, indicating his own inability to see similar characteristics in himself and, therefore, make him aware of his own foolishness, compelling him to see his life in comparison to all the other stories of folly surrounding the life of Tijl.

In Bruegel's image, there is apparently no mirror accompanying the owl. In the sixteenth century, however, artists often played with the association of the owl and mirror by portraying round objects next to the bird; as substitutes for the mirror, these objects were understood to have the same reflective quality. For example, if the hat held next to the owl in the *Dean of Renaix* is seen in the context of the emblem in the *Uilenspiegel*, the association of the hat with a mirror is clear. But there is a difference between what this duo represents and how it functions. The roundness of the hat certainly represents a mirror meant to reflect the identity of the viewer, so that he sees himself in association with the owl. But, in addition, the hat is held in such a way that the empty underside faces the beholder. As a result, the reflection reveals the viewer to be the "bearer" of the hat, indicating his participation in the activities of the room; i.e., he is as much in need of an operation as the people before him.

In Bruegel's print of the *Festival of Fools*, the back of the fool's head (*sottebol*) who carries the owl—round and empty as it is—plays a similar game. If the round ball of the head represents a convex mirror, the viewer's reflection becomes the face of the fool, and vice versa.[440] As a result, the mirror guides the viewer beyond simply

[440] Important to remember is the convex, rounded shape of mirrors during this period, which would have only contributed to the visual similarities between the fools head and a mirror. Of course, the use of the mirror in the visual arts to prick the self-awareness of the viewer to see himself in relation to what is portrayed has a long history and literature on the subject is extensive; see S. Melchior-Bonnet, *The Mirror. A History* (translated by K.H. Jewett, with a preface by J. Delumeau), New York & London: Routledge, 2001; R. Bradley, "The Speculum Image in Medieval Mystical Writers," in M. Glasscoe (ed.), *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Exeter Symposium III. Papers read at Dartington Hall, July 1982*, Exeter: University of Exeter 1982, 9-27; James Marrow, "'In desen speigell': A New Form of 'Momento Mori' in Fifteenth-Century Netherlandish Art," in *Essays in Northern European Art*

browsing the image to identify acts of folly in others, blind to his own state of depravity, rather toward the revelation of a new perspective, of seeing himself within the picture as a fool participating in the revelries. The interaction of the procession of fools and the accompanying text reveals two realms of foolishness: the fool who is blind to his foolishness and therefore a fool, and the fool who recognizes his foolishness and is therefore wise. "Yet there are *sottebollen* (numbskulls) who behave themselves wisely, / And taste the true sense of '*tSottebollen* / Because they [who] enjoy folly in themselves / Shall best hit the pin with their *sottebollen*." The owl's mirror in the center foreground, surrounded by the foolishness of the world, serves as a direct address that initiates a change in the viewer's perspective that overcomes initial blindness, toward the process of self-knowledge.

Kavaler has examined particular Dutch fools' tracts from the sixteenth century that often exhibit a brand of irony that seems especially comparable with properties that I have considered in Bruegel's work. These vernacular texts, which were generally performed aloud, take the form of confraternity oaths, devotional pledges, or invitations to communal travel that generally begin by inviting the audience to join the company. It soon becomes clear, however, that the jovial companions, whom the audience has agreed to accept, represent various follies, a disorienting reversal that may inspire listeners to inquire into their own unwitting allegiance.[441] In the short piece, "Concerning the Colorful Caps, which have Only Recently Been Fashioned and Worn," the metaphor is the sale of fools' caps to the entire populace. The speaker comes on stage praising the audience, "noble and commoner," and speaks of a great business deal he has made that he wants to share with his listeners. Having earned a pretty penny the previous year, he will once more make available his wares. Praised for their warmth and sure fit, his goods are finally revealed as fools' caps, a natural fashion statement for all the fools who lack distinguishing clothing and whose nature lies covered and concealed.[442]

Presented to Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann, Doornspijk: Davaco (1983), 154-163; Jan Białostocki, "Man and Mirror in Painting: Reality and Transience," in Irving Lavin, et al (eds.) *Studies in Late Medieval and Renaissance Painting in Honor of Millard Meiss*, New York: New York University Press (1977), 61-72; W.S. Gibson, "Hieronymus Bosch and the Mirror of Man: The Authorship and Iconography of the *Tabletop of the Seven Deadly Sins*," in *Oud Holland*, vol. 87 (1973-4), 205-226.

[441] Kavaler, *Parables of Order and Enterprise* (1999), 206.

[442] Ibid., 207. See also H. van Dijk, "Structure as a Mean's to Audience Identification" (1996).

Similarly, in her description of a wagon play presented for the *Onze-Lieve-Vrouw ommegang* of 1563, Emily Peters explains that the journey undertaken in the drama, which has a striking resemblance to a morality play such as *Elckerlijk*, lacked a protagonist.[443] No universalized human type, no Everyman, encapsulated the audience's experience. With no such universalized type to stand in for all humankind, it would appear that the main character was omitted from his own drama. The epigram, however, called upon the audience as "Everyone," while the procession itself acted as a mirror, encapsulating, in its enactment, the consciousness, or self-awareness, of the spectators.

The fool on the left of Bruegel's picture who gazes at a ball, holding it before his eyes, is similar to Niemant in *Elck*; he only knows what is before him—the appearance of a round object made of stone, a tool for play—and thus his mirror is empty and he remains a blind fool. Likewise, the viewer, too, gazes into an object of play as he holds the print before his eyes. The picture is the instrument through which the viewer participates in the game. Through the mechanism of the owl's mirror in the foreground, the image also provides the impetus for the viewer to see a reflection of his own identity as that of a fool standing amidst the revelries. By recognizing folly within himself he tastes the true sense of the game, using his mind (head) to engage in the process of interpretation. It is only through becoming self-aware that he is better able to hit the pin, namely interpret correctly. Self-knowledge in this case does not exist in recognizing and evading folly, but in understanding it as an inescapable part of human existence.

The medial nature of this picture can be compared to an older practice of using art to prick the viewer's consciousness to convey a spiritual meaning. For example, James Marrow describes a German woodcut from ca. 1500 in this context, *The Devil's and the Angel's Mirrors* (fig. 102). On the left, a demon points to a blank mirror that he holds up before a young couple and encourages them to behold themselves and enjoy the worldly pleasures of youth; the emptiness of the mirror is an indication of their blindness, that they have succumbed to the devil's persuasion. On the right side, in contrast, an angel points to a mirror that reflects the image of a skull, and urges a

[443] Peters, "Printed Processions and the Theater of Identity" (2005), 167.

group of three older figures to prepare themselves for God and for his heavenly reward.[444] By reflecting on (seeing) their inevitable end, they are more apt to prepare themselves for it.

He who holds the print of the *Festival of Fools* before his gaze, contemplating its meaning, resembles the fool who holds the ball in front of his, contemplating his next bowl. Therefore, the accompanying text that fuses the identity of the fool and the ball is equally applicable to the viewer and the art object with which he plays the game of interpretation.[445] Where the viewer and the ignorant fool depart company is in the recognition of this fact; the beholder overcomes his blindness by seeing the picture from a new perspective, a view that includes himself as a fool. Only then does he become the kind of fool that the apostle Paul so fondly wrote about in Corinthians.

III.

At this point, I have addressed specific ways in which Bruegel's picture interacts with the beholder to stage a viewing process that proceeds from blind folly to self-aware wisdom. The recognition of particular visual concepts and pictorial motifs, such as the owl's mirror and architectural design, functions to bring about revelations that lead to the viewer's shift in perspective. In the following, I would like to more elaborately compare Bruegel's image with representations of contemporary allegorical processions, such as Heemskerck's series of the *Cycle of the Vicissitudes of Human Affairs*, engraved by Cornelius Cort in 1564, as well as his *Triumph of Bacchus*. I do so in order to examine further ways in which the *Festival of Fools* resonates with, or plays on, specific elements of these allegorical processions and show that the habit of viewing formed from one context would have informed the viewer's analysis and interpretation of Bruegel's design.

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[444] James Marrow, "Symbol and Meaning: The Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance," *Simiolus*, vol. 16 (1986), 163.

[445] In his discussion of Bruegel's *Elck*, Rothstein discusses a similar alignment of the viewer's behavior with that of the print's protagonist. "As Elck stares blankly at the lantern before him, and as Niemant gazes foolishly at his reflected countenance, so does the viewer stare into yet another dark glass [the print]," Rothstein, "Pieter Bruegel's Elck" (2003), 148.

As I mentioned, scholars have shown that Heemskerck's series of the *Cycle of the Vicissitudes of Human Affairs* adhered very closely to the iconography of the wagon play, "*Den gheheelen loop des weerelts*," presented during the 1561 *Ommegang* in Antwerp. The play consisted of eight figured *tableaux vivants* staged upon moving wagons that described the deeds and acts of human life and their course in the world with the clear purpose of teaching and providing moral edification for the audience. The wagons were populated with elaborately costumed actors located within temporary, yet equally elaborate, sets constructed from wood, painted canvas and *paper maché*.[446] Each image by Heemskerck portrays the human vicissitudes, presenting an allegorical worldly state atop a wagon, surrounded by reverent subjects who showcase various gestures and actions, as well as iconographic motifs, appropriate to the theme. For example, in the *Triumph of Pride*, the queen of pride is duly honored. The woman holds a mirror before her gaze while a peacock is perched on the back of the wagon, standard attributes that accompany *Superbia*. At her feet, sits *Invidia* (Envy). The driver of the horses, which are labeled *Pertinacia* (Stubbornness) and *Curiositas* (Curiosity), is *Contemptus* (Contempt). To the left of *Contemptus*, *Iactantia* (Boastful/Bragging) raises her left hand and forms the gesture for the sex act, a gesture also prominently displayed in Bruegel's procession; in her right hand, she holds a fool's bauble. *Inobedientia* (Disobedience) and *Derisio* (Satire) stand in the right foreground, the latter holding two ears in her left hand.[447]

Similarly, as I showed in comparison to Bos's *Triumph of Bacchus*, in Bruegel's crowded procession, a fool is hoisted on the shoulders of his comrades, a stone ball is held before his gaze, a reproduction of his own identity. The diverse representations of visual equivalents for verbal expressions, the use of allegorical personifications, and varied gestures that are showcased illustrate a different sort of lexicon from the pictures of Heemskerck, one that corresponds to a codified language of foolish activities rather than classical themes. The enormous diversity of actions operates to intensify the theatricality of the image.[448] Fools pull each other's noses or thumb their noses, play Jew's harps, bang tambourines, strum violins, sell spectacles,

[446] Peters, "Printed Processions and the Theater of Identity" (2005), 1.
[447] Ilja Veldman, *Leerrijke reeksen: Maarten van Heemskerck*, Den Haag: Staatsuitgeverij (1986), 50.
[448] Boucquey, *Mirages de la Farce* (1991), 62.

show their asses, participate in a bowling game and somersault. As with Heemskerck's processions, the foolish, multi-dimensional design of the architecture in the background, as I have described it, correlates with the subject and stages "perspective" as a theme, whether the foolish perspective displayed in the foreground or the perspective from which the viewer engages the picture.

Although there are general similarities between Heemskerck's allegorical processions from 1564 and the visual strategies employed for the *Festival of Fools*, if Bruegel's picture is seen in comparison to Heemskerck's *Triumph of Bacchus* (fig. 19), as well as Bos's reproductive engraving (fig. 60), further formal and iconographic similarities emerge.[449] As I discussed in Chapter Three, Heemskerck's depiction of the mythological theme, his first Roman painting, functions as a stage on which he shows off, and makes reference to, the artistic and archaeological knowledge he had acquired during his travels in Italy.[450] His use of this subject to construct such a stage is surely no accident; as leader of the muses (an alternative Apollo Musagetes), Bacchus was also considered during the Renaissance to be the god of artistic creation.[451]

The naked entourage of Bacchus processes from right to left through a deteriorated archway and toward the round Temple of Bacchus in the background, two architectural structures not completely unlike those in Bruegel's print. The movements of the figures populating the scene, as well as the paraphernalia they posses, vary drastically so as to showcase not only a kind of encyclopaedia of antique bacchanalia, but also Heemskerck's anatomical prowess. The thyrsus-bearer in the right foreground announces Bacchus's entrance. The god's festive devotees get drunk on wine, children play with animals, flowers and grapes are abundant and broken antique pots litter the ground. In the center foreground, a man plays a horn, a satyr plays a flute and women bang tambourines behind them. On the far left, a man balances on stilts while another is in mid-somersault.

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[449] For general discussions of Heemskerck's *Triumph of Bacchus*, see Ilja M. Veldman (1990-1); R. Grosshans (1980); J.C. Harrison (1987). For a general study of representations of this classical theme, see Martin Gesing, *Triumph des Bacchus: Triumphidee und bacchische Darstellungen in der italienischen Renaissance im Spiegel der Antikenrezeption*, Frankfurt a.M: Peter Lang, 1988.
[450] Harrison (1987), 49.
[451] Weinberg, *The Wine and the Will* (1972), 51-57. See also Svetlana Alpers, *The Making of Rubens*, New Haven: Yale University Press (1996), esp. 101-157.

The painting is loaded with characters and structures from antiquity that would have been recognized and appreciated by Heemskerck's educated viewers. A panther, Bacchus's emblematic animal, strides along in front of the cart. The colossal foot resting prominently in the left foreground reproduces the sandaled foot that stood originally before the Porticus Octavia (fig. 103).[452] Jefferson Harrison has pointed out that the satyr caryatid on the ruined arch closely follow the design of those found in Heemskerck's time in the Della Valle Collection.[453]

Furthermore, the naked, muscular male bodies are painted in an Italianate style, such as that of Michelangelo. The figures in the foreground reach, run, twist and tumble, but do not come close to making narrative sense. Instead, like the antique references, the figures and the manner in which they are painted, both in style and elegant pose, are still more references meant to be recognized and appreciated as such. For example, although the viewer may get the feeling the procession is moving slowly because of the multiple stationary figures represented, the figure just right of center holding the reins to the donkey is depicted as running, in full stride, his right leg about to collide with the putto holding up a mirror. Closer to center, the striding posture of the trumpet-blowing bacchant was a canonical High Renaissance motif that the artist (and his viewers) could have observed in any number of Italian prints and paintings.[454] The figure walks to the left, his left foot awkwardly stepping on the face of the drunken sartyr and his gaze directed behind him, not realizing that his next step will collide with the man somersaulting. We cannot be sure which way this figure somersaults, up and over to the right or down to the left, but we know that he will run into something regardless—either the man previously mentioned walking toward him or the left stilt of the black man. Finally, the man on stilts who looks to his right does not see that his next step will be in the path of a stationary goat.

In the center foreground, a smiling putto disrupts the illusion of the art object by angling toward the viewer a mirror to reveal the reflection of a sartyr's posterior, as well as the excrement flowing from it. This action directly addresses the viewer, connecting him to the world of the image. The central motif is not just one more act of

[452] Harrison (1987), 288-289.
[453] Ibid.
[454] Ibid.

revelry, rather the reflection offers commentary on the actions and behavior surrounding it. This particular emphasis on faeces—a motif unknown in classical or Italian versions of the theme—is a sign that the usual meaning of such an image, pleasure and enjoyment in an untroubled pagan world, has changed.[455] Heemskerck depicts a classical theme in an Italianate style, but the artist also provides a more certain Netherlandish moral twist.[456]

This motif is a type of owl's mirror similar to the one in Bruegel's image; interestingly, it is even located in a similar compositional place. A helpful comparison is a woodcut by Albrecht Dürer from *Der Ritter vom Turm* (fig. 104) (Basel, 1493: a translation of a moralist French tract by Chevalier de la Tour Landry), which shows a noble woman revealing her concern for outward beauty by combing her hair before a mirror. Instead of seeing a reflection of herself, she sees a reflection of the devil who stands behind her, specifically his bottom from which faeces emerge.[457] Although in this image the mirror is an attribute of vanity, while in Heemskerck's painting it is more directed at drunkenness, the function of the mirror as a reflection of, and direct address to, the viewer's conscience is similar.

While Heemskerck's painting serves as a stage for him to showcase his artistic skill and learnedness, referencing actual antique ruins and a Michelangesque style that his humanist contemporaries would have identified and appreciated, the mirror in the foreground pricks the consciousness of the viewer and casts a sense of satire which functions to transform the image from a triumph of Bacchus into a kind of triumph of folly. The marginal motif turns the painting into a mock-triumph, a self-reflexive image that offers a critique of its subject. In a similar fashion, Bruegel's *Festival of Fools* is no less a triumphal procession, even incorporating specific visual strategies and pictorial motifs previously employed for allegorical processions—references which, like those of Heemskerck, are meant to be recognized and factored into the

[455] Veldman, "Elements of continuity" (1990-1), 133.
[456] This also occurs in Dutch sixteenth-century drama; see J.J. Mak, "Pyramus en Thisbe gemoraliseerd," *De Nieuwe Taalgids*, vol. 40 (1947), 175-179. See also the recent publication of Yona Pinson, "Moralized Triumphal Chariots – Metamorphosis of Petrarch's *Trionfi* in Northern Art (1530-1560)," in Ingrid Alexander-Skipnes (ed.), *Cultural Exchange between the Low Countries and Italy (1400-1600)*, Turnhout: Brepols, 2006.
[457] For a discussion of this type of owl's mirror see, Verhuyck,"Ulenspiegels spiegel in de zestiende eeuw," (1988), 201.

viewer's analysis and interpretation of the picture. In this way, the triumphs of folly by Bruegel and Heemskerck can also be seen in comparison to Erasmus's *Praise of Folly*—as a paradoxical encomium (ironic inversion) in which folly is the protagonist, classical form the frame of reference and self-knowledge the objective.[458]

To conclude, the habit of viewing sustained by the processional format of Heemskerck's print series, and others like it, would have also informed the way Bruegel's contemporary viewers analyzed the *Festival of Fools*, both in terms of process and end result. In Heemskerck's *Cycle of the Vicissitudes of Human Affairs*, Peters explains that the first plate introduces the theme of the course of the World's vicissitudes by showing a representation of a worldly globe surrounded by the Four Elements upon a wagon moving in a leftward direction.[459] The wagon is driven by the personification of Time, who holds the reins of two horses identified as Day and Night. Above them, renderings of the Four Winds appear to circulate in the air. The globe and the personages, all of whom represent aspects of Nature, clearly connect the idea of the cyclical nature of human life to wider cosmological cycles. The seven plates thereafter portray the human vicissitudes. In each plate, an allegorical worldly state is presented atop a wagon; each wagon, in turn, has a causal relationship to the one following it. Riches, in the second plate, sits atop a wagon driven by the personification of Guile. Pride, which results from wealth, sits at her feet, depicted in smaller scale. In the following print, Pride is seen again, now full scale and seated in the place of Riches. In this way, Heemskerck made the causality between one worldly state and another visually explicit. Each subsequent plate repeats this basic composition and causal relationship, so that it is clear that Pride begets Envy, Envy begets War, War begets Want, Want begets Humility and Humility begets Peace. At the end of the cycle, Riches is shown as the progeny of Peace, completing the cycle and illustrating for the viewer the point of origin for the *tableau* of Riches at the beginning of the series. Like the wagon plays that these designs are based on, the

[458] For a discussion of the use of the paradoxical encomium in the visual arts, see Falkenburg "Pieter Aertsen, Rhyparographer" (1995).
[459] Peters, "Printed Processions and the Theater of Identity" (2005), 143.

procession from one print to the next enacts a metaphorical journey of the viewer from one state of mind to another, from ignorance to a state of knowledge.[460]

Each print in the cycle portrays two walking figures in the same location in the foreground which function both to personify specific characteristics of the subject honored and intensify the processional, continuous nature of the series. For example, in the *Triumph of Pride*, *Inobedientia* (Disobedience) and *Derisio* (Satire) process forward with the wagon, with *Inobedientia* pausing to gaze out at the viewer. In the following plate of the *Triumph of Envy* (fig. 105), *Inquietas* (Disquiet) and *Perturbatio* (Confusion) stride elegantly to the left, each participating in a symbolic action illustrating her characteristic. Likewise, in Bruegel's *Festival of Fools* four figures are isolated on the front edge of the picture. Each stands above a stanza of the caption below, a text that progresses from a description of foolishness, to an observation of foolish acts, to the object of the game. The face of the fool in the far left bottom corner is hidden from view as he bends down to attempt to bowl between his legs, aiming in the opposite direction from the pin to be hit. This figure is located directly beneath the "head fool" I described earlier, who gazes at his ball and sees only a tool for play. Likewise, the identity-less figure in the foreground represents self-unawareness; his bowl away from the pin betrays his complete blindness. Next to him, a fool marches to the right in the direction of the game's objective while thumbing his nose, a gesture of derision.[461] This is a man who sees that which is before him, but possesses no self-knowledge and, therefore, only mocks and derides the actions of others. Closer to the pin, the fool standing in the center with his back to the viewer, looking in on the festivities and holding an owl aloft, would have been seen in association with the owl's mirror. This figure represents the moment of self-reflection for the viewer, when he gains self-knowledge; instead of simply identifying the folly before him, he sees himself as a fool amidst the revelry. Finally, a man in the far right bottom corner plays the flute and kneels down to point at the target of the bowling game, the small isolated pin. As the stanza below this figure indicates, in order to hit the pin—that is to say, to interpret the picture correctly—the viewer must enjoy folly within himself. Like Heemskerck's allegorical procession, these figures in the foreground, on the one hand,

[460] Ibid.
[461] Moxey, "Pieter Bruegel and the *Feast of Fools*" (1982), 643.

personify specific characteristics of the folly of humanity. On the other hand, their progression from left to right illustrates the process of interpretation which leads the viewer from one state of awareness to another, from blind ignorance toward the cultivation of self-knowledge. The processional aspect representing transformation in the multiple plates of Heemskerck is now translated into four figures in a single image. Nevertheless, based on their shared format, structuring and themes, the habit of viewing cultivated by allegorical processions brought to Bruegel's *Festival of Fools* informed the viewer's analysis and interpretation.

As I have discussed, the theater of the *rederijkers* in the mid-sixteenth century had ties both to native Netherlandish and to classical traditions. Whereas the dramatic forms remained basically those of late Medieval morality plays and farces, rederijker authors translated classical dramas and, by Bruegel's time, began to use the persuasive methods of rhetorical argumentation in their own works.[462] Thus, Latinate forms were often reproduced in the vernacular language, and classical subjects were recast within a contemporary context.[463] The composite nature of Bruegel's *Festival of Fools*—a picture that combines activities defined by local custom with formal qualities, including the Roman architectural style in the background, employed for representations of allegorical processions such as Heemskerck's *Cycles* and *Triumph of Bacchus*—amounts to a particularly Northern humanist ideal: situating classical texts and/or Italianate visual concepts within the vernacular and translating antique stories into indigenous topics. This inter-pictorial dialogue entails not only conscious quotes of certain motifs—position and structure of figures, attributes, composition—but also

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[462] Meadow, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder's Netherlandish Proverbs* (2002), 17. See also Bart Ramakers, *Spelen en Figuren* (1996); G. Brom, *Schilderkunst en Literatuur in de 16e en 17e eeuw*, Utrecht and Antwerp, 1957.

[463] For example, in Bruegel's *Elck* the attribute of the lighted lantern especially brings to mind Diogenes and his searching with a lantern in broad daylight for an honest man; see Stefan Schmidt, *Diogenes. Studien zu seiner Ikonographie in der niederländischen Emblematik und Malerei des 16. und 17. Jahrbunderts*, Hildesheim: Olms, 1993. On Bruegel's depiction of a classical drama translated to the sixteenth century stage, see Ramakers, "Bruegel en de rederijkers" (1997); see also Ramakers, "Kinderen van Saturnus" (2002); Herman Pleij, "De Laatmiddeleeuwse Rederijkersliteratuur als Vroeg-humanistische Overtuigingskunst," *Jaarboek der Koninklijke Souvereine Kamer van Rhetorica van Vlaanderen de Fonteijne*, vol. 34 (1984), 65-95. For a general study of this phenomenon, see Jean Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition and its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art*, New York: Harper Torch Books, 1961; Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958; Don Cameron Allen, *Mysteriously Meant: The Rediscovery of Pagan Symbolism and Allegorical Interpretation in the Renaissance*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970.

notions of form and style cultivated by sixteenth-century Northern humanists who advocated the assimilation of ancient stories and Latinate forms into vernacular works, both literary and visual.

Conclusion

Hans Vredeman de Vries and Pieter Bruegel: An Artistic Confrontation

Throughout this study, I have argued that Bruegel's mediation of pictorial motifs and visual concepts from history painting for his representations of peasants and festivities serves multiple functions: to question what constitutes a proper work of art, to cultivate his own vernacular style and to appeal to the humanist ideal of employing classical frames of reference for subjects or events that are local in character. At the core of this artistic agenda are the concepts of *ars* (skill) and *ingenium* (imagination or invention) which facilitated the creative integration of art and nature. For the Pléiade group, for example, this meant the use of classical Latinate forms (art) to cultivate the vernacular language (nature). Despite the fact that Bruegel's later scenes of peasants have been categorized as paintings representing an indigenous idiom that eschews foreign influence, I have discussed in greater detail the hybrid nature of these images, which 'artfully' depict the 'natural' life of Brabant. Bruegel's pictures simultaneously question the uncritical acceptance of artistic standards and assumptions defined in Italy and push for the pictorial possibility of incorporating these very principles into what was increasingly recognized as a Northern idiom. The result is a vernacular style that is as capable of copious, apt and ornate expression as that of Italy. As I have discussed his art thus far, particularly the later peasant paintings, one might even go so far to say that Bruegel (standing on the shoulders of other artists such as Jan van Hemessen and Pieter Aertsen) created, developed and made artistically visible and viable the very idea of a sixteenth-century vernacular style. This is especially the case since if one were to point to any kind of "vernacular style" prior to Bruegel, it would be the slender figures of early Netherlandish artists such as Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden.

I have proposed the *convivium* tradition, especially the way in which these dialogues were enacted in the sixteenth-century domestic interior, as a model for gaining a better understanding of the analytical nature of the conversations that would

have taken place in front of these pictures. For images in which discovery and revelation were integral for visual analysis, a viewing process that is dependent on the participation of the "beholder's share," these texts offer examples of people who engaged various topics—art, poetry and religion—on multiple different levels during lengthy conversations, which were often competitive in nature. Whether the topic of conversation was a scripture verse, poem, painting, statue or garden, nothing was taken at face value, rather everything, even a single flower, was taken as a point of departure for further inquiry and discussion on a deeper level, both semantically and analytically. While the food they ate cultivated the body, participants of dinner parties gave primary concern for the cultivation of the mind through open-ended dialogue.

In terms of Bruegel's art, I have based my research primarily on pictures themselves and the visual evidence they provide, both within his own work and that of his influential predecessors and contemporaries, such as Hemessen and Aertsen. The issue that I would like to return to in this concluding section is this: to what degree were Bruegel's viewers privy to the various visual discourses at play in his pictures. To do so, I will examine one piece of written evidence that offers an indication that Bruegel's "vernacular scenes" were viewed and discussed as operating within the artistic and viewing contexts I have described.

In his *Schilder-boeck*, published in 1604, Karl van Mander conveys an anecdote about Bruegel that provides us with an example of an artistic discourse, both visual and verbal.[464] Describing the life of Hans Vredeman de Vries, a painter and designer of architectural scenes who may have known Bruegel personally, Van Mander recounts an incident that occurred soon after Vredeman's return to Antwerp after living in Aix la Chapelle and Liége.[465] "He received a commission from the treasurer of the town, Aert Molckeman, to paint a view of a summer house in perspective; he painted an open door in the picture to increase its beauty. Pieter Bruegel happened to visit while Vredeman was away; he took his tools and, in the doorway, painted a peasant with a

[464] See A. Monballieu, "Een werk van Pieter Bruegel en H. Vredeman de Vries voor de tresorier Aert Molckeman," *Jaarboek van het Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen* (1969), 113-135 and Gibson, *Pieter Bruegel and the Art of Laughter* (2006).

[465] There is evidence, albeit inconclusive, that Bruegel worked with Vredeman in the same studio in Mechelen, that of Claude Dorisy. In any event, he would have been well acquainted with Vredeman's work through their mutual cooperation with the publisher Hieronymus Cock. On their connection, see *Tussen Stadspaleizen en Luchtkastelen* (2002), 11, 161.

soiled shirt in intimate relation with a peasant woman. People laughed very much about this; it pleased Molckeman so much that he would not have the painting altered for any amount of money."[466]

The accuracy of this story has been doubted partly due to the fact that, as Walter Melion has observed, Van Mander often invents anecdotes to elaborate on artistic theory and practice.[467] The author describes certain biographical or behavioral aspects of an artist, which on occasion turn out to be fictitious, in order to support his own claims about the artist's status and practice.[468] This would no doubt be the case for this story involving Bruegel and Vredeman since it supports one aspect of Van Mander's description of Bruegel's life: "few pieces by his hand can be looked at earnestly without laughing."[469] There has been additional scepticism because Van Mander places the event sometime during the 1570's, post-dating Bruegel's death in 1569. However, Adolph Monballieu has plausibly suggested that Vredeman painted the picture for Molckeman sometime in the 1560's when Bruegel was living in Brussels, where Vredeman, although based in Antwerp, had many artistic contacts.[470] Furthermore, Christopher Heuer has argued convincingly that the source for Van Mander's information about Vredeman's life was a letter written by the artist himself,

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[466] Karel van Mander, *Schilder-boek: Dutch and Flemish Painters*, trans. Constant van de Wall, New York: McFarlane, Warde, McFarlane (1936), 300. "en creegh stracs te Brussel te Schilderen / voor den Tresorier Aert Molckeman, een Somer-huys in Perspectijf / daer versierende onder ander een open deur / waer in/in't afwesen va[n] Vries / Pieter Brueghel vindende hier de reetschap / hadde ghemaeckt eenen Boer met een beseghelt hemde / vast doende met een Boerinne / waerom seer ghelacchen / en den Heer seer aenghenaem was / die't om groot gelt niet hadde laten uytdoen," Karel van Mander, *Het Schilder-Boek*, Utrecht: Davaco Publishers (1604 / 1969).

[467] Melion, *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon* (1991), 167-168. Historical accuracy is also a question taken up in Jürgen Müller's published dissertation, *Concordia Pragensis, Karel van Manders Kunsttheorie im Schilder-Boeck: Ein Beitrag zur Rhetorisierung von Kunst und Leben am Beispiel der rudolfinischen Hofkünstler*, München, R. Oldenbourg Verlag (1993). See also Hessel Miedema's review in *Oud Holland*, vol. 109, no. 3 (1994), 149-155; R. Genaille, "Carel van Mander et la jeunesse de Bruegel l'Ancien," *Jaarboek van het Koninklijk museum voor schone kunsten Antwerpen* (1982), 119-151; Hessel Miedema, *Karel van Mander*, vol. 3 (1996), 252-267; J. Muylle, "Pier den Drol—Karel van Mander en Pieter Bruegel. Bijdrage tot de literaire receptie van Pieter Bruegels werk ca. 1600," in *Wort und Bild in der niederländischen Kunst und Literatur des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts*, Erftstadt: Lukassen Verlag (1984), 137-144.

[468] For example, his claim that Jan Gossaert was originally a blacksmith or that Bruegel was a peasant follows a pattern of traditional tropes from antiquity that assert humble backgrounds to significant artists. On artist anecdotes as cultural mythology, see Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment*, New Haven: Yale University Press (1979), 11, 124-25.

[469] As reprinted in Roberts-Jones, *Pieter Bruegel* (2002), 332.

[470] Gibson, *Pieter Bruegel and the Art of Laughter* (2006), 11. Monballieu, "Een werk van Pieter Bruegel en H. Vredeman de Vries" (1969).

in which case the story would have been conveyed directly rather than hearsay or legend.[471]

Despite our inability to assess the empirical validity of Van Mander's anecdote, it is important to take seriously this story of artistic behaviour and reception. At the very least, the event offers a glimpse into a possible visual discourse between two well-known artists and how the confrontation of their different artistic styles was evaluated in the latter portion of the sixteenth century.[472]

Vredeman, often called the "Flemish Vitruvius," created plausible but imaginative architectural representations that incorporated a mixture of designs from classical and gothic sources. These depictions are highly ornamented and palatial and often provided decorative backdrops for historical scenes; the human staffage for which were usually added by other hands such as Lucas van Valckenborch and Marten van Cleve. He received commissions from a number of important patrons, including the court of Rudolph II in Prague and the House of Stuart in Wales.[473]

The door, like the one which acts as a stage for Bruegel's peasants in Van Mander's anecdote, was an important motif in Vredeman's work. In images that aim to create spatial recession, the open door is a device that intensifies the illusion of depth and simulates views into buildings and gardens, inviting the eye to pass unsuspectingly into a fictive space.[474] Other instances in which Vredeman used this device include the burial chapel of Jacob Moor in St. Peter's, Hamburg, in which two painted doorways opened onto flights of steps in an illusion so powerful that,

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[471] Vredeman is the first living artist to receive a chapter in Van Mander's *Schilder-boeck*, and it is possible that the two men knew each other after 1600. Christopher Heuer explains that the actual place the *Schilderboeck* seems to have been written was Zevenbergen castle, north of Haarlem, around 1601-1602. Since Vredeman was living in Amsterdam, a mere seven kilometers at this time, a meeting between Van Mander and Vredeman almost certainly occurred. If this is the case, Vredeman could have personally conveyed this story to Van Mander. See Christopher P. Heuer, *The City Rehearsed: Print, Performance, and the Architectural Imaginaries of Hans Vredeman de Vries*, Oxford and New York: Routledge (forthcoming, 2008). I am thankful to Dr. Heuer for sharing with me a chapter of his book prior to publication. See also H.E. Greve, *De bronnen van Carel van Mander voor "Het leven derf doorluchtighe Nederlandtsche en Hoogduytsche schilders" (Quellenstudien zur holländischen Kunstgeschichte II),* The Hague (1903), 161.

[472] On this issue, see Marc Gotlieb, "The Painter's Secret: Invention and Rivalry from Giorgio Vasari to Honore de Balzac," *Art Bulletin*, vol. 84, no.3 (September 2002), 469-490. On the importance of artist anecdotes for the criticism of art and the disciplinary discourse of art history, see Catherine Sousloff, *The Absolute Artist: The Historiography of a Concept*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (1997), 94-100, 138-158.

[473] *Tussen Stadspaleizen en Luchtkastelen* (2002), 11; Heuer, *The City Rehearsed* (forthcoming, 2008).

[474] Melion, *Shaping the Netherlandish Canon* (1991), 32.

according to Van Mander, visitors placed bets on the truth of the vistas. In the courtyard of Hans Lomel's house in Hamburg, he painted a doorway on a wooden fence screening a coppice that seemed to frame a view to trees and a pond. The trees rising above the fence seemed continuous with the trunks visible through the doorway.[475] Regarding a commission by Gillis Hofman, Van Mander writes that Vredeman: "*maakte op een plaats tegenover een poort, een grote perspectivische schildering die een doorkijk in een tuin toonde*." He comments further that after the painting was finished some visiting German nobles, along with the *prins van Oranje*, thought it was a real building and an actual view into a garden.[476] Vredeman's painting of a summer house in perspective for Molckeman no longer exists, and we are not told whether it is a mural or panel painting. However, we can imagine its effects from the still extant depictions by the artist of buildings set within a rural landscape, such as the *Lazarus Before the Palace of the Rich Man* (ca. 1583, fig. 106), which are all skillful perspectival constructions. A painting of a scene such as this, commissioned by an important municipal official, indicates the high standard of living with which Molckeman wanted to be associated. As an architectural design that created the illusion as if looking through a window, it also represents a style of art that had acquired a certain status in the North as a result of the influx of humanist ideas.[477] Vredeman certainly was highly influenced by Vitruvius and Serlio and his work followed certain standards of representation set out by Italian artists and writers.[478]

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[475] Ibid.

[476] Karel van Mander, *Het Schilder-boeck*, Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek (1995), 285.

[477] I emphasize style here because it has been recently argued that Vredeman as an artist was somewhat of a failure; see Heuer, *The City Rehearsed* (forthcoming, 2008). On the important relationship between painting and architecture, especially within a domestic interior, and the necessity of representing "reality" in painting (that which does or could exist in the world), see Vitruvius, *Ten Books on Architecture*, trans. Ingrid D. Rowland, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1999), 7.5.1-5. Leon Battista Alberti wrote that painting should be like "a transparent window through which we look out into a section of the visible world," and later in Book 1, "the art of painting begins with a drawn rectangle, which is to me like an open window from which the *historia* is contemplated," *On Painting*, London: Penguin Books (1991), 37-59. In addition, Karel van Mander praises Pieter Aertsen's ability to fool the viewer with illusionist depictions so realistic that one has the impression of being able to stretch one's hands out to grasp them, Karel van Mander, *Het Schilder-Boek*, Haarlem (1604), fol. 33v, stanza 53:e-h and stanza 55:a-f.

[478] Krista de Jonge, "Vitruvius, Alberti and Serlio: Architectural Treatises in the Low Countries, 1530-1620," in Vaughen Hart (ed.) *Paper Palaces: The Rise of the Renaissance Architectural Treatise*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press (1998), 281-296.

Considering that Vredeman's commission was for a summer home, it is important to understand that such "places of retreat" for wealthy merchants or government officials were located outside the city walls in the countryside. Walter Gibson points out that the designations of these country places in contemporary records as *hof van plaisance* and *speelhuys* suggest that they were indeed retreats, providing escape for their owners from the business world of Antwerp. It has been estimated that between 1540 and 1600 at least 250 country residences existed within a twenty-kilometer radius of Antwerp.[479] Therefore, not only were these second homes located in the vicinity of rustic life, the mentality with which they were viewed ("playhouses" or "pleasure palace") provides an interesting context for Vredeman's painting and especially for the peasant couple Bruegel appends.

With the knowledge that the human staffage in Vredeman's architectural designs were often added by other artists, on the one hand, Bruegel's grafitto wittily equips his depiction of a residence in the countryside with "proper" rustic ornamentation. Not only do peasants fittingly decorate a summer house in the suburbs outside of the city, their erotic embrace functions to comically aid in the achievement of the paintings probable effect on the viewer, namely to remind the owner of the pleasurable atmosphere of his "*speelhuys*" beyond the city walls, away from work and worry. On the other hand, Van Mander's account of Bruegel's graffito, a peasant with a soiled shirt busy with his female companion in front of the open door, seems to indicate that the artist also violates social decorum. For example, Vitruvius writes that one's design must take into account what is fitting to the occasion, the public, the situation, the character and status of the patron. Decorum brings with it a concern for the unity of content, form and purpose.[480] By interjecting characters into the scene whose origin, costume and behavior disrupt Vredeman's pristine, fictive space in the house of a wealthy patron who is a high-ranking government official, Bruegel creates a tension that elicits laughter from the viewer. Nevertheless, Bruegel's viewers do not

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[479] Walter Gibson, *Pieter Bruegel and the Art of Laughter* (2006), 78-79. Roland Baetens and Bruno Blondé speculate that the number of villas near Antwerp was around 370; "Habiter la ville: la culture de l'habitat urbain," in Jan Van der Stock (ed.) *La ville an Flandre: culture et société, 1477-1787*, Brussels: Crédit Communal (1991), 59-70. See also Goldstein, "Keeping up Appearances" (2003).

[480] Caroline van Eck, review of Alina A. Payne, *The Architectural Treatise in the Italian Renaissance: Architectural Invention, Ornament, and Literary Culture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, in *Art Bulletin*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2001.

exclusively respond with laughter; according to Van Mander, Molckeman reveals his respect for the artist by asserting that he would not have Bruegel's intervention painted out for any amount of money.

In his recent book, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder and the Art of Laughter*, Gibson is one of the few scholars who take up Van Mander's story.[481] He does so in order to support his thesis that Bruegel's contemporaries reacted to his depictions of rustic life with amusement and outright laughter. For Gibson, this anecdote offers evidence that Bruegel's peasants were not always viewed with an eye toward didactic moralism, but were often portrayed in the context of simple, relaxing humor.[482] I argue, however, that to contend that Bruegel's graffito on Vredeman's picture was merely appreciated as funny neglects a fundamental issue at play in the story. Two questions must be posed: why did Bruegel's act of depicting two peasants on Vredeman's painting of a summer house in perspective elicit such laughter, and why was this juxtaposition valued so highly by Molckeman? As the story is told by Van Mander, it seems that the viewers of this unexpected collaboration were not just laughing at Bruegel's peasants; rather, they were laughing at the fact that this motif of rustic lovers had been imposed upon what was most likely a sophisticated, perspectival design of a Renaissance palace in the woods. Vredeman's lofty painted space, itself located within a lofty social setting, was now inhabited by lowly, befouled characters. The inspiration to laugh emerges from the tension created by Bruegel's disruption of the illusion. The high Renaissance style of the architecture, coupled with a pair of peasants whose actions are sexually suggestive, considered to be a low subject, was an artistic provocation that undercut Vredeman's ambitious design.[483] I would extend this observation a step further to say that, in this context, Bruegel's peasant with the "*beseghelt*" shirt offers further visual commentary. "*Beseghelt*" also means "sealed," as in "provided with a seal or mark of authentication." Referring to this term, Gibson draws attention to a woodcut by Pieter Flöttner of ca. 1535, in which an impoverished artisan raises a banner bearing the image of a large wine jar and a turd; in the accompanying poem,

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[481] Gibson, *Pieter Bruegel and the Art of Laughter* (2006), 10-13; Jürgen Müller also discusses the anecdote, *Concordia Pragensis* (1993).
[482] The debate whether or not Bruegel's peasants should be seen in a comic or moralistic light dates back to the polemical exchange between Svetlana Alpers and Hessel Miedema; see n. 43.
[483] On the peasant as a low subject, see Raupp, *Bauernsatiren* (1986) and Vandenbroeck, *Beeld van de Andere* (1987).

Flöttner tells us that the banner has been "sealed with a turd [*versigelt mit eym dreck*]." One might presume, then, that the shirt of Bruegel's peasant is "sealed," or soiled, in a similar way.[484] What Bruegel paints on Vredeman's design provides insight into how Bruegel and his viewers might have understood his artistic action. As the peasant's shirt is sealed, so Bruegel "*beseghelt*" the painting with carousing peasants, his own signature or "mark of authentication."

In order to clarify further complexities of the issue, I will risk making an anachronistic comparison between Van Mander's anecdote and a similar story involving two very different artists, one Renaissance and one Modern. Probably the most well known act of artistic graffito in the twentieth century is Marcel Duchamp's *L.H.O.O.Q.,* a cheap postcard-sized reproduction of Leonardo's *Mona Lisa* upon which the artist drew a mustache and a thin goatee beard (fig. 107). On the one hand, Duchamp's Mona Lisa defaces (literally) a cherished work of art from the height of Italian Renaissance painting and draws attention to its descent to the level of an ordinary reproduction. A simple mustache and goatee transform a once dignified and refined painting of a woman into an image that is ridiculous. The title makes the point, too, since when pronounced in French "L.H.O.O.Q." is revealed to be a pun on the phrase "Elle a chaud au cul," which translates colloquially as "She's hot in the ass."[485] One could argue, however, that Duchamp's acts of artistic vandalism, against both the painting and its title, transform an image of the distant past into an object of a more familiar modern vernacular. The viewer must puzzle out the joke, creating an element of surprise and laughter upon the discovery of the artist's witty intervention. Conversely, if Duchamp's graffito removes Mona from her ancient pedestal, it also works in the other direction, elevating the crude commercially printed card from the realm of the cheap distributable image to a signature work of art. By imposing what Duchamp asserted to be a radical new standard of art, though a standard subsequently acknowledged by his viewing public, onto one of the most well-known icons of the Renaissance canon, the artist questions the very nature of art itself as it was understood

[484] Gibson, *Pieter Bruegel and the Art of Laughter* (2006), 162, n. 49.
[485] For discussions on this work, see Florence de Mèredieu, *Duchamp en forme de ready-made*, Paris: Blusson, 2000; Jeffrey Weiss, *The Popular Culture of Modern Art: Picasso, Duchamp, and Avant-gardism*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994; Robert A. Baron, *Mona Lisa Images for a Modern World*, http://www.studiolo.org/Mona/MONALIST.htm (January 31, 2007).

up to the second decade of the twentieth century. Duchamp's *L.H.O.O.Q* can be seen as one work of art in a string of objects categorized as "readymades"; works that he did not make in the traditional artistic sense, but whose artistic value lie in the way they push the boundaries of art by leading the viewer to see everyday, ordinary objects from a new, more critical, perspective. Duchamp's mustache and goatee, along with his new French colloquial title, not only serve to make an enigmatic portrait more familiar but also function to elevate the familiar and practical, a postcard reproduction, to the level of a complex work of art. The combination of what was traditionally considered to be high and low can serve to both mock that which is elevated as well as make sophisticated that which is common. More importantly, however, it calls into question, or even erases, the very distinction between the two.[486]

Returning now to Van Mander's anecdote: is a similar conclusion possible for Bruegel's marks on the painting of Vredeman? I think Bruegel's addition of frolicking peasants was not only valued because it humorously ornamented the work of his Renaissance counterpart and violated social decorum, but also because it raised questions about the very nature of what constituted a proper painting, thereby pushing the boundaries of art. The juxtaposition of a lofty, pristine architectural design with lowly, "beseghelt" peasant characters not only disrupts Vredeman's fictive illusion, it also argues for Bruegel's depiction of the rustic man and woman as worthy subjects of art. Van Mander's account of the varied responses to the picture points us in this direction. On the one hand, much like the modern audience of Duchamp's postcard, viewers of the picture responded to the provocation with laughter. On the other hand, Molckeman, the commissioner of the design, cherished it greatly. With this sentiment, we can understand Bruegel's action not only as a friendly joke of graffito but also as a competitive game of one-upmanship.[487]

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[486] Gibson and Ramakers argue for a similar kind of slippage between 'high' and 'low', 'learned culture' and lower classes in sixteenth rederijker and humanist circles; see Gibson, *Pieter Bruegel and the Art of Laughter* (2006), 98 and Ramakers, "Bruegel en de rederijkers" (1987). Meadow also describes the slippage between "high" and "low" in relation to Dutch proverbs and classical *adagia*; see *Pieter Bruegel's* Netherlandish Proverbs (2002).

[487] As a possible topos, Pliny offers an anecdote that recounts a similar visual interaction between Apelles and Protogenes. Apelles went to visit Protogenes's studio, but on his arrival only an old woman was present keeping watch over a large panel placed on an easel. The woman explained that Protogenes was out and asked the name of the visitor. Apelles replied by picking up a brush and drawing a line of extreme delicacy across the board. On the return of Protogenes the woman told him what had happened.

By the late 1560s, Bruegel's pictures of peasant festivities defined him as an artist as much as architectural designs defined Vredeman. Van Mander's anecdote about Bruegel's artistic intervention and Molckeman's response to it offers us rare insight into the artistic atmosphere in the Netherlands during the latter portion of the sixteenth century, one in which, as I have argued, norms and values about what constitutes a proper work of art were being reconsidered.[488] In this particular context, two artistic identities are pitted against one another, yet we are told Molckeman's final judgement is that the combination of the two surpasses Vredeman's work on its own. Provocation leads to tension, tension leads to laughter, laughter leads to appreciation, appreciation leads to a renegotiation of artistic values. Further, Molckeman's value judgement is even more important since, as a wealthy, educated municipal official, he is representative of the people who owned many of Bruegel's paintings during the artist's lifetime, such as Niclaes Jongelinck and Jean Noirot.

On the one hand, the peasants Bruegel added to Vredeman's painting can be understood in similar terms as someone writing on a public wall, "John was here." It was the artist's "mark of authentication" and subsequent viewers could have immediately attributed the source of the man and woman to him. On the other hand, Bruegel's act also provoked a response beyond what a simple mark of graffiti would illicit. The laughter and appreciation of Molckeman and his friends not only communicates that they were mindful of the tension created by the juxtaposition of these two artistic modes, but Molckeman's desire to keep the crude figures on the wall of his home also indicates that Bruegel's artistic program for the development and validation of a visual vernacular had already taken root.

When he had considered the precision of the line he at once declared that his visitor had been Apelles. Then in another color Protogenes drew a second still finer line upon the first, and went away, telling the woman to show it to Apelles if he returned, and add that this was the man he was seeking. Upon Apelles return, he saw the mark and was ashamed to be beaten. He drew a third line of another color, cutting the two first down their length and leaving no room for any further refinement. After Protogenes saw that he was beaten, he found Apelles and they agreed that they would hand down the painting just as it was to posterity; a marvel to all, but especially to artists. *The Elder Pliny's Chapters on the History of Art*, trans. K. Jex-Blake, Chicago: Argonaut Publishers (1968), 123.

[488] On the changing art market and the emergence of new genres and art theoretical ideas in the sixteenth century, see Silver, *Peasant Scenes and Landscapes* (2006).

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Samenvatting

Pieter Bruegel de Oude:
Kunstdiscours in de zestiende-eeuwse Nederlanden

Mijn dissertatie behandelt twee soorten conversatie uit het midden van de zestiende eeuw, die onafhankelijk van elkaar bestonden maar toch in belangrijke mate aan elkaar waren gerelateerd. De eerste en belangrijkste vorm van artistiek vertoog waar ik mij mee bezig houd is de interactie tussen verschillende kunstenaars en kunstenaarspraktijken zoals die zich ontvouwt in de beeldende kunst zelf. Hier ben ik vooral geïnteresseerd in de manier waarop kunstenaars in hun werk opvattingen of schilderkunstige elementen van andere kunstenaars of artistieke tradities citeren of incorporeren, waarbij het geciteerde nooit volledig aan eigenheid en herkenbaarheid verliest, een manier van citeren die vaak een vertaling van inhoud en vorm vanuit de ene naar de andere context inhoudt. De tweede vorm van discours betreft de conversatie tussen beschouwer en beeld, en tussen beschouwers onderling. Daarbij gaat het speciaal om de manier waarop schilderkunstige strategieën de visuele ervaring van de beschouwer faciliteerden en de analytische bekwaamheid van het publiek op de proef stelden.

Pieter Bruegel participeerde in het visuele discours van zijn tijd door de individuele manier waarop hij omging met de op de klassieken geënte Italiaanse Renaissance kunst die in het begin van de zestiende eeuw in de Nederlandse schilderkunst was geïntroduceerd. Tegen het midden van de zestiende eeuw begon zich steeds duidelijker een polemiek af te tekenen onder Noordelijke kunstenaars aangaande de vraag hoe men zich zou moeten opstellen tegenover deze nieuwe kunst. Aan de ene kant was er de opstelling van kunstenaars (zoals Frans Floris) die een classicerende stijl van schilderen in navolging van de Italianen voorstonden; aan de andere kant waren er kunstenaars die zich keerden tegen deze stijl, althans het klakkeloos kopiëren daarvan, en in plaats daarvan een locaal idioom trachtten te ontwikkelen. Tot nu toe hebben geleerden Bruegel als een voorstander van deze laatste school gekarakteriseerd. Zij betogen dat Bruegel een stijl exploreert (hier verder aangeduid met de term "vernacular") die de realistische voorstelling van "het natuurlijk leven van Brabant" behelst. Het onderhavige proefschrift is gewijd aan een kritische analyse van deze

polemiek die in geschrift maar ook in verf werd uitgevochten, in het bijzonder aan de positie die Bruegel daarin innam.

Voortbouwend op eerdere suggesties van Carl Gustaf Stridbeck, wend ik mij eerst tot de Pléiade-dichters in Frankrijk, een groep van zeven lieddichters die zich inzetten voor de cultivering en het gebruik van de eigen taal in plaats van het klassiek Latijn. Ik gebruik de cultuur van de Pléiade-dichters als een model volgens welke ook Bruegels specifieke positie in het artistieke discours van zijn tijd begrepen kan worden. Deze Franse dichters, onder wie Joachim Du Bellay (1522-1560) en Pierre de Ronsard (1524-1585), onderschreven de humanistische voorkeur voor de thematiek en vormentaal van de klassieke literatuur, maar verwierpen tegelijkertijd het propageren van het Latijn als de enige taal van waarde voor artistieke en wetenschappelijke expressie. Deze dichters zagen het als hun verantwoordelijkheid om de eigen taal te verdedigen en het gebruik ervan te stimuleren door te laten zien dat het niet minder dan de Klassieke talen in staat was tot dichterlijke expressie volgens de regels van de retorica en poëtica. De volkstaal was in hun ogen in diskrediet geraakt omdat ze zich liet leiden door ongecultiveerd (ordinair) spraakgebruik; het Latijn daarentegen zagen zij geleid door hogere principes van poëtische taal. Ook de volkstaal zou nu geschikt gemaakt kunnen worden voor dichterlijke expressie, en wel door er dezelfde principes van klassieke poëtica aan ten grondslag te leggen (niet door slechts de uiterlijke vorm van het Latijn te imiteren). Op deze wijze zou de volkstaal getransformeerd kunnen worden tot kwalitatief iets geheel nieuws. Hoewel de Pléiade-traditie in Frankrijk ontstond, was zij ook bijzonder invloedrijk voor schrijvers in het Noorden, zoals Lucas de Heere en Jan van der Noot (1540-1595). Dezen waren in de jaren zestig van de zestiende eeuw prominente leden van de Antwerpse *rederijkerskamer*, een gildeverband van zowel kunstenaars als schrijvers/rederijkers.

Tegen de achtergrond van deze ontwikkelingen in literaire kringen wordt een drietal van Pieter Bruegels latere schilderijen met boerenvoorstellingen – de *Boerenbruiloft*, de *Boerendans* en de *Nestrover* (alle daterend uit 1568, en alle zich bevindend in het Kunsthistorisches Museum te Wenen) – als ook zijn prent het *Zottenfeest*, aan een nauwkeurige analyse onderworpen. Door deze werken te vergelijken met de specifieke wijze waarop de Pléiade-dichters en rederijkers de volkstaal verrijkten, wordt de notie van een “vernacular” stijl die de oudere

kunsthistorische literatuur gebruikte om Bruegels werk te karakteriseren van een nieuw fundament voorzien. Het betoog concentreert zich op de stelling dat Bruegels cultivering van deze stijl niet, zoals steeds is verondersteld, een verwerping van een Italiaans-classicerend kunstideaal inhoudt, maar een toeëigening van dat ideaal en die principes inhoudt in een schilderkunstige praktijk van artistieke inventie die zich allengs, langs lijnen van een in verf uitgevochten polemisch discours, uitkristalliseerde tot een heel eigen (noordelijk) 'volkstalig' stijlidioom. Genoemde werken van Pieter Bruegel brengen dit discours op complexe wijze voor het voetlicht. Zij vertalen vorm, stijl en iconografie van Italiaanse en antieke voorbeelden naar afbeeldingen met een inheems-rustieke thematiek, waardoor 'kunstvolle' (*ars*) voorstellingen van het 'natuurlijke' (*natura*) zestiende-eeuwse landleven van de Nederlanden ontstaan. Teneinde de bewering te ontzenuwen dat Bruegels latere werken een inheems idioom tonen dat buitenlandse invloeden schuwt, wordt veel aandacht geschonken aan de analyse van de versmelting van vaak als antithesen ervaren grootheden—'verheven' (classicerende) vorm; 'lage' (boerse) motieven—en de overeenkomsten tussen picturale praktijk met de literaire exercities van de Pléiade.

Deze stelling aangaande het ontstaan van een 'vernacular' stijl in de Nederlandse schilderkunst van de zestiende eeuw als onderdeel van de picturale polemiek van die tijd wordt in het proefschrift tevens uitgewerkt met betrekking tot de involvering van de eigentijdse beschouwer in dit discours. Bruegels inter-pictoriale dialoog bevat zowel zelfbewuste citaten van bekende motieven – houdingen van figuren, attributen of composities – als noties van artistieke en theoretische stijl in Italië en de Nederlanden (d.w.z. kwesties van decorum). Deze praktijk van het incorporeren van motieven van andere kunstenaars wierp niet alleen vragen op voor het zestiende-eeuwse publiek van Bruegels schilderijen over de aard van artistieke representatie *an sich*, maar maakt ook aanspraak op – was inderdaad afhankelijk van – verscheidene niveaus van het bewustzijn van de beschouwer – literair, religieus en artistiek bewustzijn – tijdens het proces van visuele analyse. Bruegels schilderijen zijn zodanig samengesteld dat ze de interactie aangaan met de veelheid aan kennis die de beschouwer met zich meebrengt wanneer hij naar een schilderij kijkt. Daarom bevragen die schilderijen de interpretatieve capaciteiten van de beschouwer, stellen die zelfs op de proef.

Die interpretatieve capaciteiten van de beschouwer worden onderzocht binnen een concrete context van beschouwen, namelijk die van het vroegmoderne private huishouden. Er is betoogd dat Bruegels *Boerenbruiloft* waarschijnlijk hing in de eetkamer van de rijke Jean Noirot, Meester van de Antwerpse Munt van 1562 tot 1572. Wanneer we naar Bruegels geschilderd festijn kijken en beseffen dat het schilderij in een eetkamer hing, waar geleerde gasten zelf deelnamen aan de maaltijd, dan lijken de ruimte en de handelingen van de beschouwers door het schilderij te worden gedupliceerd. Aangezien het geschilderde feestmaal een weerspiegeling vormt van het feestelijke samenzijn van Noirots gasten, nodigt het schilderij uit tot een reflectief soort conversatie. Gesprekken over de feestende boeren en de fictieve ruimte waarin zij zich bevinden leiden onvermijdelijk tot gesprekken over soortgelijke activiteiten in de ruimte vóór het schilderij en over de aard van de relatie tussen beide. Eigentijdse ideeën over gedrag en conversatie rond het feest worden daarom belangrijke bouwstenen voor de reconstructie van een hypothetisch scenario voor de receptie van kunst.

Dat hypothetisch scenario kan worden gereconstrueerd met gebruik van de *convivium* traditie. Als literair genre strekt die traditie zich uit van de Antieken tot aan de Renaissance en beschrijft zij de gesprekken die vooraf, tijdens of na de maaltijd plaats hadden. Dialogen als Erasmus' *Convivia*, bijvoorbeeld, bieden gedetailleerde instructies voor gepaste conversatie binnen een feestelijke omgeving. De gesprekken die in deze tekst worden beschreven vonden echter niet alleen plaats in de eetkamer maar ook op andere plekken in het huishouden, vóór en na de maaltijd, als ook in de tuin. Hoewel Erasmus's dialogen voor het grootste deel denkbeeldig en fictief waren, waren zij, vanwege hun populariteit, van grote didactische waarde en werden ze tot maatschappelijke standaarden die nagevolgd werden. De *convivia* van de rijken en hoogopgeleiden, helpen ons dan ook bij het beter afbakenen van de context waarin eigentijdse beschouwers schilderijen als Bruegels *Boerenbruiloft* konden begrijpen.

Een en ander wordt in het proefschrift hoofdstuksgewijs als volgt behandeld. Het eerste hoofdstuk is gewijd aan een nauwkeuriger bestudering van de twee vormen van conversatie die ik hierboven kort heb aangeduid. Deze bestudering geschiedt met name in de context van het Pléiade-programma en de *convivium*traditie. In het eerste deel bevraag ik de term "vernacular" zoals die is toegepast op Bruegel in de recente

kunsthistorische literatuur, met name de manier waarop de term is gebruikt om de kunstenaar te situeren binnen een schilderschool die het Italianiserende, klassieke idioom afwijst. Teneinde het concept van "vernacular" verder uit te breiden, neem ik twee eigentijdse teksten onder de loep, een geschreven door Lucas de Heere en de andere door Abraham Ortelius (1527-1598). Kunsthistorici hebben beide teksten uitgelegd als illustratief voor de polemiek tussen een Noordelijke schilderschool en een Italianiserende stijl. Zonder te ontkennen dat deze teksten een polemisch karakter hebben, herdefinieer ik de onderhavige problematiek door een analyse te geven van twee eigentijdse artistieke discours die innig met elkaar waren verbonden en die wijdverspreid waren in Bruegels kringen: ten eerste, het debat rond kunst en natuur; ten tweede, het programma van de Pléiade-dichters en de rederijkerskamers ten voordele van de volksstaal. Ik betoog dat deze twee discussies niet alleen fundamenteel zijn voor een beter begrijpen van de kunsttheoretische argumenten van De Heere en Ortelius, maar ook dat zij een model aanreiken volgens welke het inter-pictoriale discours dat zich in Bruegels latere werk voltrekt bezien moet worden.

In Hoofdstuk Twee ga ik met behulp van de *convivium*traditie dieper in op de context van het beschouwen van schilderijen die voor het private huishouden waren bestemd. Mijn aandacht richt zich speciaal op de zes *convivia* van Erasmus, die voor het eerst in 1518 werden gepubliceerd. Deze geschriften berusten op de gedachte dat, terwijl men eet of drinkt om het lichaam te voeden, men tegelijkertijd met elkaar converseert teneinde de geest te spijzen. Uitgaande van deze *convivia* betoog ik dat Bruegels schilderijen beschouwd kunnen worden als "conversatiestukken" die functioneerden in een omgeving die analytisch denken, het tentoonspreiden van retorische scholing, geleerdheid en spitsvondigheid, kennis van de klassieke cultuur en actuele religieuze vraagstukken en het hebben en cultiveren van verschil van mening op prijs stelde. Gesprekken vonden plaats in een omgeving die discussie meer waardeerde dan het geven van definitieve antwoorden.

Hoofdstuk Drie is gewijd aan een nauwkeurige visuele analyse van drie van Bruegels latere werken met boeren – de *Boerenbruiloft*, de *Boerendans* en de *Nestrover*. Ik heb mijn bespreking van elk schilderij telkens in twee categorieën onderverdeeld. Aan de ene kant, analyseer ik in formele zin de visuele mechaniek en syntaxis van de schilderijen. Ik concentreer mij in het bijzonder op de manier waarop,

Bruegel bewust bekende elementen van de historieschilderkunst citeerde en op subtiele wijze samenbracht met een gedetailleerde afbeelding van een "vernacular" onderwerp. Dit samenbrengen, zo betoog ik, moet worden begrepe in de context van de cultivering en de verrijking van het "vernacular" en kan worde vergeleke met humanistische pogingen tot het cultiveren van de volksstaal. Ik zal aantonen dat deze zogenaamde visuele transformaties niet los kunnen worden gezien van de inhoud van de schilderijen. En verder zal ik latten zien dat ze fundamenteel zijn voor het begrijpen van het soort visuele ervaring dat Bruegels schilderijen faciliteerde. Naar aanleiding van de *Boerenbruiloft* luidt de fundamentele vraag: Wat is de aard van een feest? Zowel Bruegels afzonderlijke figuren als de diagonale compositie geven de beschouwer aanleiding tot een discussie over maatschappelijke omgangvormen – een balans tussen plezier en beschaafdheid – en maken de beschouwer eveneens attent op de relatie tussen een werkelijk bruiloftsfeest en één van de belangrijkste feesten in de Bijbel, het bruiloftsfeest te Kana. Naar aanleiding van de *Boerendans* kan de volgende vraag worden gesteld: Wat is de aard van een kermis? Door visuele elementen uit Italiaanse bacchanalia te combineren met een meer traditioneel gekozen iconografie van boerenkermissen en door composities te componeren die vragen om een specifieke manier van kijken naar bepaalde motieven en handelingen in relatie tot elkaar thematiseert Bruegel het "doorzien" van de beschouwer en zijn visueel onderscheidingsvermogen. De kunstenaar stelt een manier van kijken centraal die voorzichtig omspringt met de fragiele balans tussen feestelijk, zorgenvrij gedrag en een oprechte eerbied voor religieuze feestdagen, een balans, die, volgens de kerkelijke en politieke leiders, tijdens dorpskermissen niet meer in acht werd genomen. Het schilderij de *Nestrover* beschouw ik, in navolging van andere kunsthistorici, als een gedetailleerde en complexe afbeelding van boeren in hun landelijke omgeving die zou zijn beschouwd in relatie tot een Nederlands spreekwoord en een motief uit Sebastian Brants *Narrenschiff*. Maar ik betoog ook dat het schilderij zou zijn vergeleken met Erasmus' beschrijving van zotheid in de *Lof der Zotheid*. Aan de andere kant neemt Bruegel in zijn voorstellingen met boeren ook specifieke schilderkunstige elementen op die een beschouwer aan afbeeldingen van Johannes de Doper zouden hebben herinnerd. Die herinneringen zouden aanleiding hebben gegeven tot discussies over en

inzicht in de mogelijk thematische verbanden tussen het leven van een bijbelfiguur en de handelingen van de boer in het midden van de voorstelling.

Het *Zottenfeest*, een prent door Pieter van der Heyden naar Bruegels ontwerp, vormt het onderwerp van het vierde en laatste hoofdstuk. Hoewel het hier een prent en niet een paneelschilderij betreft, en het publiek van het *Zottenfeest* daarom veel breder en diverser was, zal ik aantonen dat de praktijk van kunst maken en kunst zien zoals die in de voorgaande hoofdstukken zijn beschreven ook op deze specifieke prent toepasbaar is. Voortbouwend op de sleutelbegrippen van blindheid en zelfkennis zoals ik die heb ontwikkeld in mijn bespreking van de *Nestrover*, weef ik verschillende elementen van de afbeelding – de architectuur, de handelingen van de zotten en de tekst – samen teneinde te laten zien op welke manier Bruegel voortborduurde op de optochten zoals die gestalte kregen in eigentijdse *facties* (wagenspelen die tijdens toneelfestivals werden opgevoerd). Bruegel maakte daarbij gebruik van de architectuur, de figuren en de tekst die hij aan de prent toevoegde om de werelden van de beschouwer en die van de afbeelding visueel en intellectueel samen te voegen. In het bijzonder zal ik uitleggen hoe het bowlspel dat daar is afgebeeld aanleiding kon geven tot het begrijpen van de handeling van interpretatie zelf als een oefening in het overwinnen van blindheid door middel van het verkrijgen van zelfkennis. Vervolgens leg ik uit dat Bruegels allegorie van de zotheid niet alleen visueel resoneert met *facties* maar ook met afbeeldingen van allegorische optochten. Ik betoog dat, hoewel Bruegels prent tegen de achtergrond van deze volksspelen werd begrepen, er ook aspecten van de prent zijn die een visueel discours opriepen met andere allegorische optochten, met name die van Maarten van Heemskerck. Meer in het bijzonder denk ik hier niet alleen aan de manier waarop er in Bruegels optocht visuele verwijzingen zijn opgenomen naar locale spreekwoorden, gebaren en gebruiken die specifiek zijn voor dit onderwerp, maar ook aan de manier waarop de prent het midden zoekt tussen klassieke architectuur en motieven die overeenkomen of spelen met een type afbeelding dat, hoewel niet klassiek van aard, enkel en alleen werden toegepast in klassieke iconografie en koninklijke optochten. Met als resultaat dat Bruegel ons een locaal feest presenteert in een vorm die een zekere manier, of gewoonte, van beschouwen met zich meebrengt. Deze gewoonte van beschouwen zou de interpretatie van het onderwerp door de beschouwer hebben beïnvloed.

Ik sluit de dissertatie af met een “close reading” van een anekdote over Bruegel die door Karel van Mander in zijn leven van Hans Vredeman de Vries (1527-1607) werd opgetekend. De meeste kunsthistorici hebben deze beschrijving van een toevallige artistieke interactie tussen Bruegel en Vredeman over het hoofd gezien. Toch biedt de anekdote een kijkje in een mogelijk kunstdiscours tussen twee bekende kunstenaars en in de manier waarop de confrontatie van hun verschillende stijlen werd geëvalueerd in het laatste deel van de zestiende eeuw.

Curriculum Vitae

Todd Richardson was born on 3 June 1973 in Louisville, Kentucky (U.S.A.). In 1995, he received a Bachelor of Arts degree (cum laude) from the University of Mississippi, where he studied philosophy and studio art. In 2000, he received a Master of Arts (summa cum laude) in Religion from Memphis Theological Seminary in Memphis, Tennessee. From 2000 to 2003, he was a Ph.D. student in the History of Art and Religion at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California, where he received a second Master of Arts degree (distinction) in 2003. After completing three years of the doctoral program at the GTU, he came to Leiden University to study with prof. dr. Reindert Falkenburg. From 2003 until 2007, he was an 'assistent in opleiding' in Oude Beeldende Kunst in the art history department. To support his studies, he was a recipient of a two-year Samuel H. Kress research fellowship and a J. William Fulbright scholarship.

Since coming to Leiden, Todd Richardson has taught a number of courses in the Oude Beeldende Kunst section, such as the visual culture of the Reformation, Religion and Aesthetics, Northern Renaissance art and Pieter Bruegel the Elder. His most recent publication is editing and contributing to *Image and Imagination of the Religious Self in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Brepols, 2007). Over the course of his tenure at Leiden, he has given academic papers at various universities and conferences, both in Europe and the U.S., such as Cambridge University, Université Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne, Sixteenth Century Conference and the College Art Association. He has also organized panels at a number of conferences and, in 2006, he co-organized an international conference in Leiden, "Formulating a Response: Methods of Research on Italian and Northern European Art, 1400-1600."

From 2004 to 2006, Todd Richardson worked as bestuursecretaris in the art history department. Two primary responsibilities were, first, to assist in the structural formation and curriculum development of a new two-year research masters program, entitled "Western and Asian Art Histories in a Comparative Perspective," and, second, to assist in the development and coordination of a new foreign exchange program for faculty and graduate students between the art history departments at Leiden University, the University of California, Santa Barbara, and Emory University.

Figure 1: Pieter Aertsen, *Pancake Eaters*, 1560, oil on panel. Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen

Figure 2: Cornelius Massys (after), *Egg Dance*, 1558, engraving. F.W.H. Hollstein, *Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings Woodcuts, ca. 1450-1700*, vol. IX, Amsterdam: Menno Hertzberger, 164, nr. 32.

Figure 3: Maarten van Heemskerck, *Pieter Jan Foppesz and his family*, ca. 1530, oil on panel. Kassel, Staatliche Kunstsammlung

Figure 4: Joos van Cleve, *Christ Child and John the Baptist Embracing,* 1525-29, oil on panel. Den Haag, Mauritshuis

Figure 5: Detail of Figure 1, *Pancake Eaters*

Figure 6: Detail of Figure 4, *Christ Child and John the Baptist*

Figure 7: Godfried Schalcken, *Boy with Pancake,* late 17th century, oil on panel. Hamburg, Kunsthalle

Figure 8: Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *Peasant Wedding Banquet*, 1568, oil on panel. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum

Figure 9: Detail of Figure 8, *Peasant Wedding Banquet*

Figure 10: Pieter van der Borcht, *Peasant Wedding Banquet,* 1560, etching. Brussels, Bibliothéque royale Albert I

Figure 11: Hans Sebald Beham, *Peasant Festival*, 1535, woodcut. London, British Museum

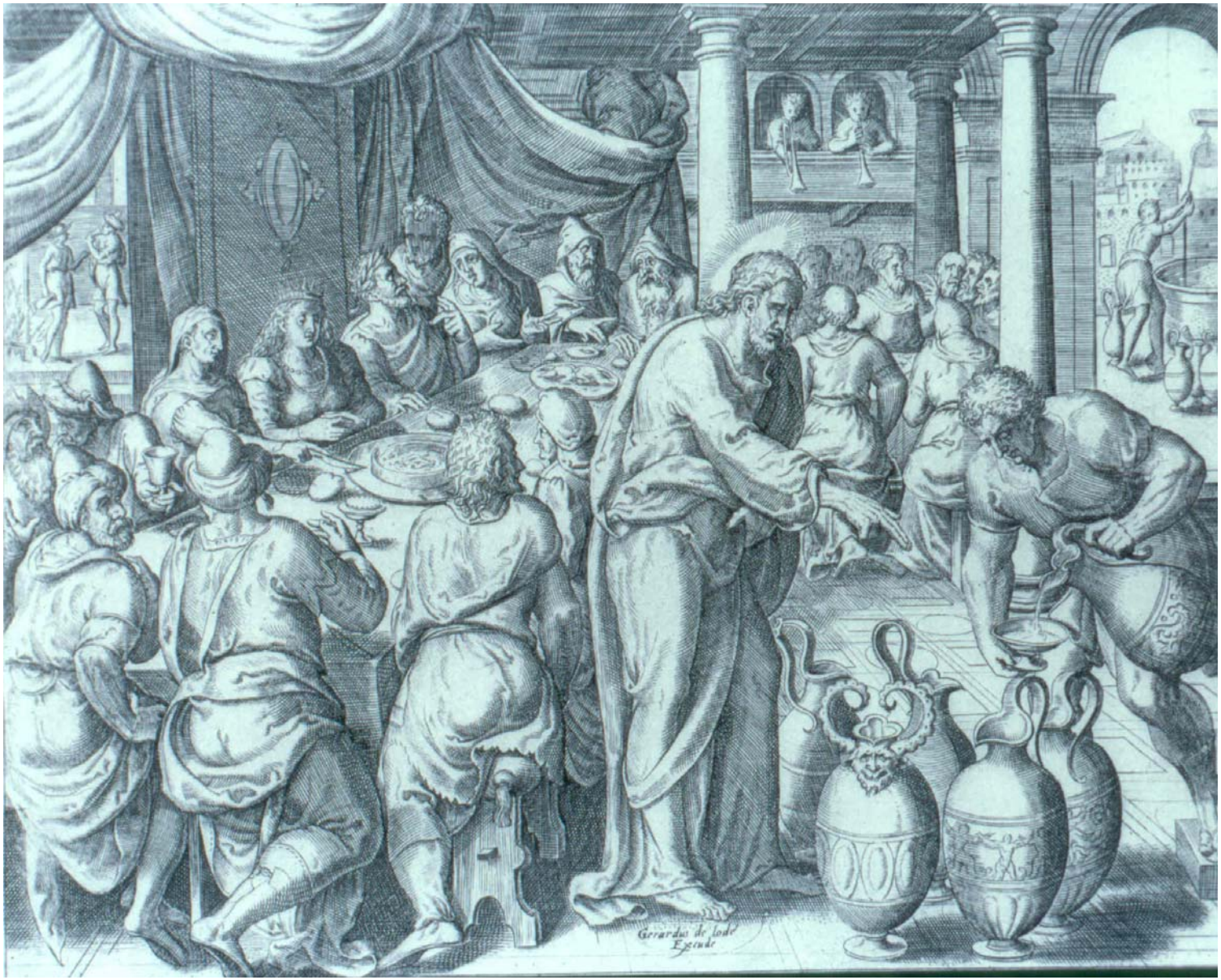


Figure 12: Gerard van Groningen (after), *Wedding at Cana*, before 1574, engraving.
Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet

Figure 13: Detail of Figure 8, *Peasant Wedding Banquet*, beer pourer

Figure 14: Detail of Figure 12, *Wedding at Cana*, wine pourer

Figure 15: Detail of Figure 8, *Peasant Wedding Banquet,* bride

Figure 16: Detail of Figure 12, *Wedding at Cana*, bride

Figure 17: Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *Peasant Dance,* 1568, oil on panel. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum

Figure 18: Titian, *The Andrians*, 1525, oil on panel. Madrid, Museo del Prado

Figure 19: Maarten van Heemskerck, *Triumph of Bacchus,* 1536-7, oil on panel. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum

Figure 20: Frans Floris, *Feast of the Gods*, ca. 1550-1560, oil on panel. Graz, Alte Galerie des Landesmuseums Joanneum

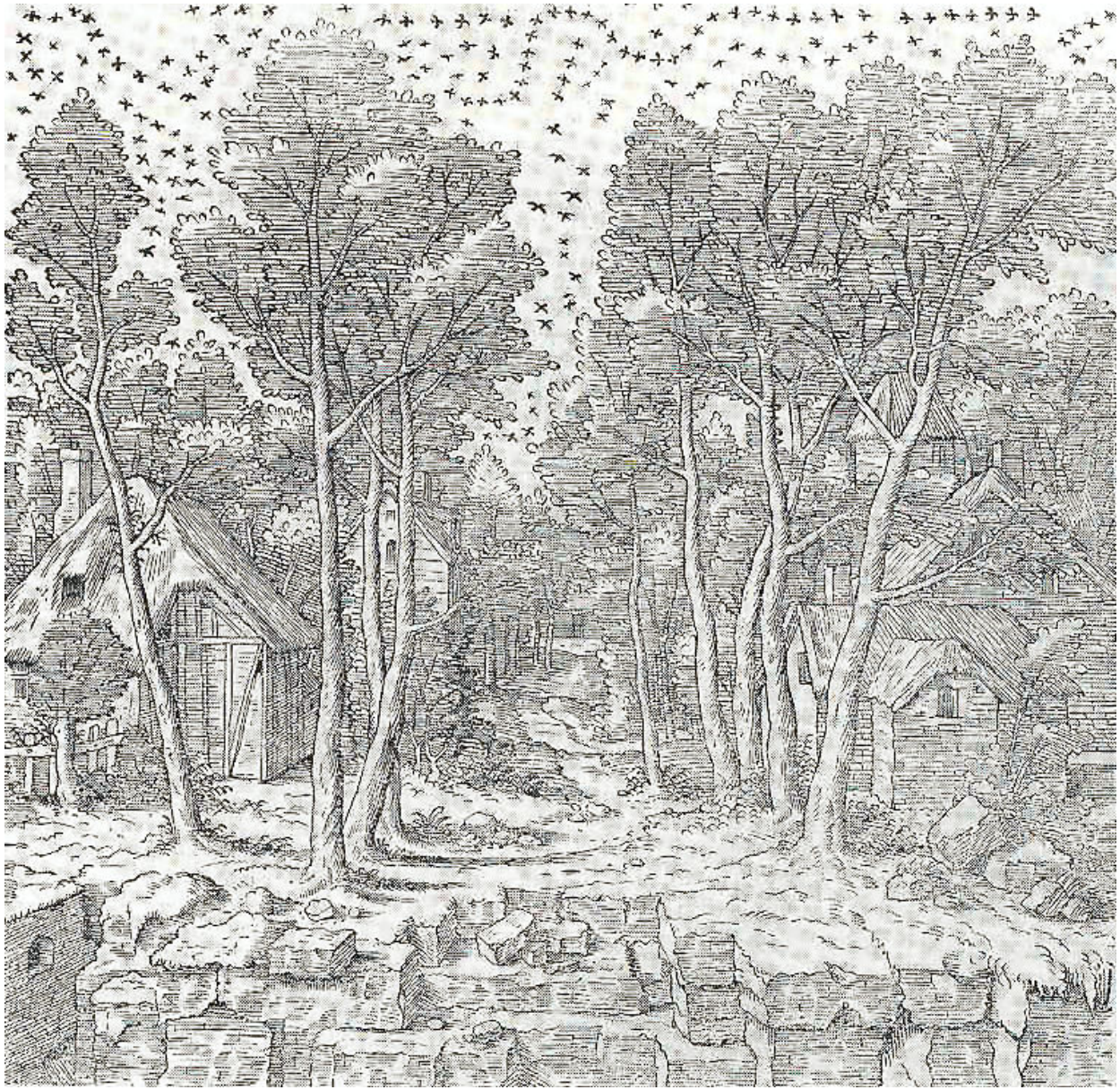


Figure 21: Sebastian Serlio, Setting for Satiric Drama, woodcut, *Dat tweede boeck, Tderde Capitte(l), Een tractact van Perspectiven aengaende den superficien*. f. xxvii. Houghton Library, Harvard University

Figure 22: Johannes and Lucas van Doetecum after Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *St. George Kermis*, ca. 1559, etching with engraving. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

Figure 23: Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *Peasant and Nest Robber*, 1568, oil on panel. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum

Figure 24: Michelangelo, Detail from Sistine Chapel, beneath the Erythraean Sibyl. Rome, Vatican

Figure 25: Leonardo da Vinci, *John the Baptist*, 1513-16, oil on panel. Paris, Louvre

Detail of Figure 23,

Peasant and Nest Robber

Figure 26: Marcantonio Raimondi, *John the Baptist,* engraving. Illustrated Bartsch: The Works of Marcantonio Raimondi and of his School, vol. 27, New York: Abaris Books, 1978.

Detail of Figure 23, *Peasant and Nest Robber*

Figure 27: Leonardo da Vinci (school of), *St. John the Baptist*, 1513-16, oil on panel. Paris, Louvre

Figure 28: Pintoricchio, *John the Baptist*, 1504, fresco. Sienna, Chapel of John the Baptist

Figure 29: Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *Procession to Calvary*, 1565, oil on panel. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum

Figure 30: Pieter Aertsen, *Egg Dance,* 1557, oil on panel. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

Figure 31: Detail of Figure 8, (infrared) *Peasant Wedding Banquet*, photograph by Adri Verburg

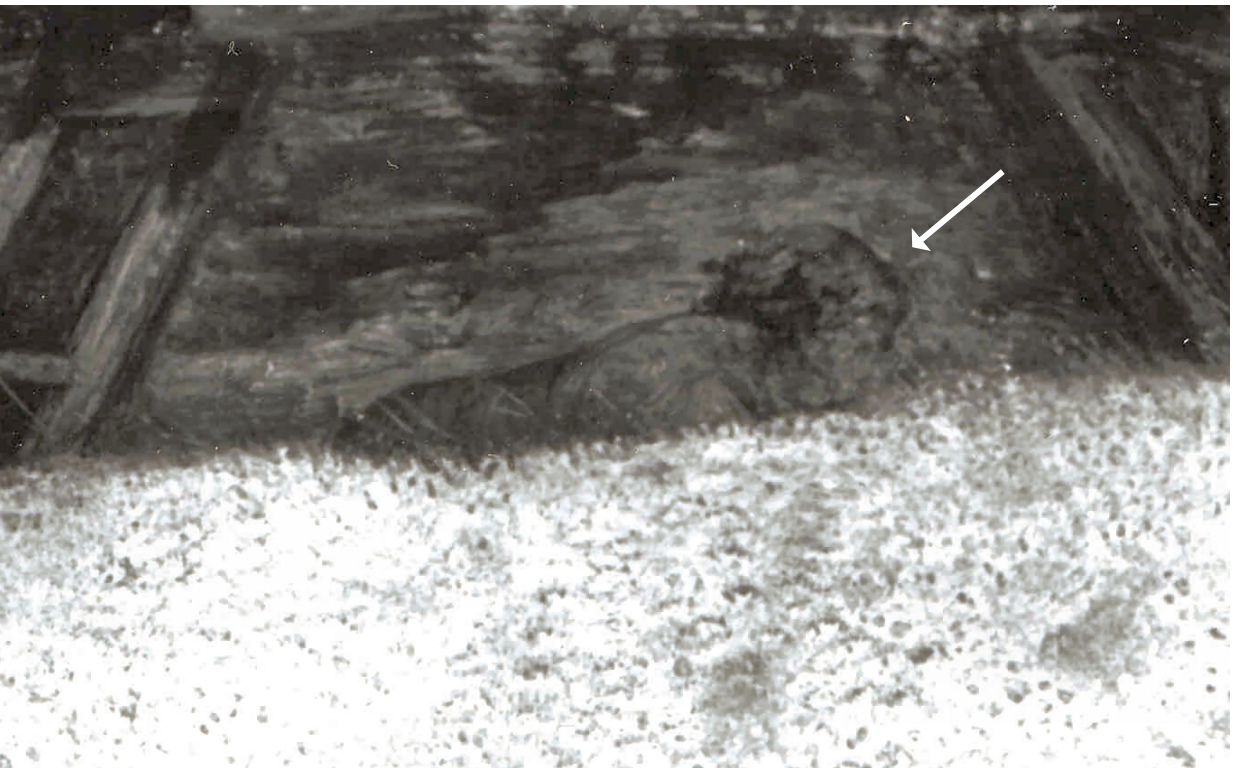


Fig. 32: Detail of Figure 8, (infrared) *Peasant Wedding Banquet*, photograph by Adri Verburg

Figure 33: Jan Mandijn, *Burlesque Feast*, 1550, oil on panel. Bilbao, Museum of Fine Arts

Figure 34: Pieter Aertsen, *Peasant Feast*, 1550, oil on panel. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum

Figure 35: Petrus Christus, *Death of the Virgin*, 1457-67, oil on wood. San Diego, Timken Art Gallery

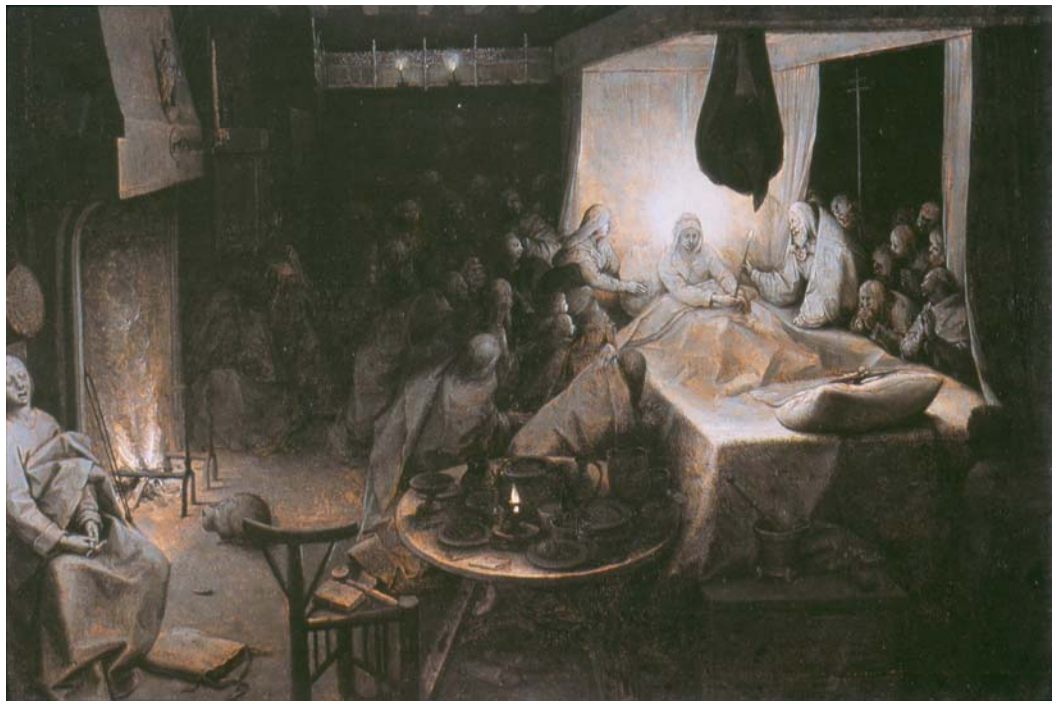


Figure 36: Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *Death of the Virgin*, 1564-5, oil on panel. Banbury, England, Upton House

Figure 37: Detail of Figure 8, *Peasant Wedding Banquet*

Figure 38: Raphael, *Entombment,* 1507, oil on wood. Rome, Galleria Borghese

Figure 39: Bernardo Daddi (1512-c.1570) after Raphael or Michel Coxie, *Psyche Taken to a Deserted Mountain,* 16th century engraving. Plate 5 from the series *The Fables of Psych*. San Francisco, Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco

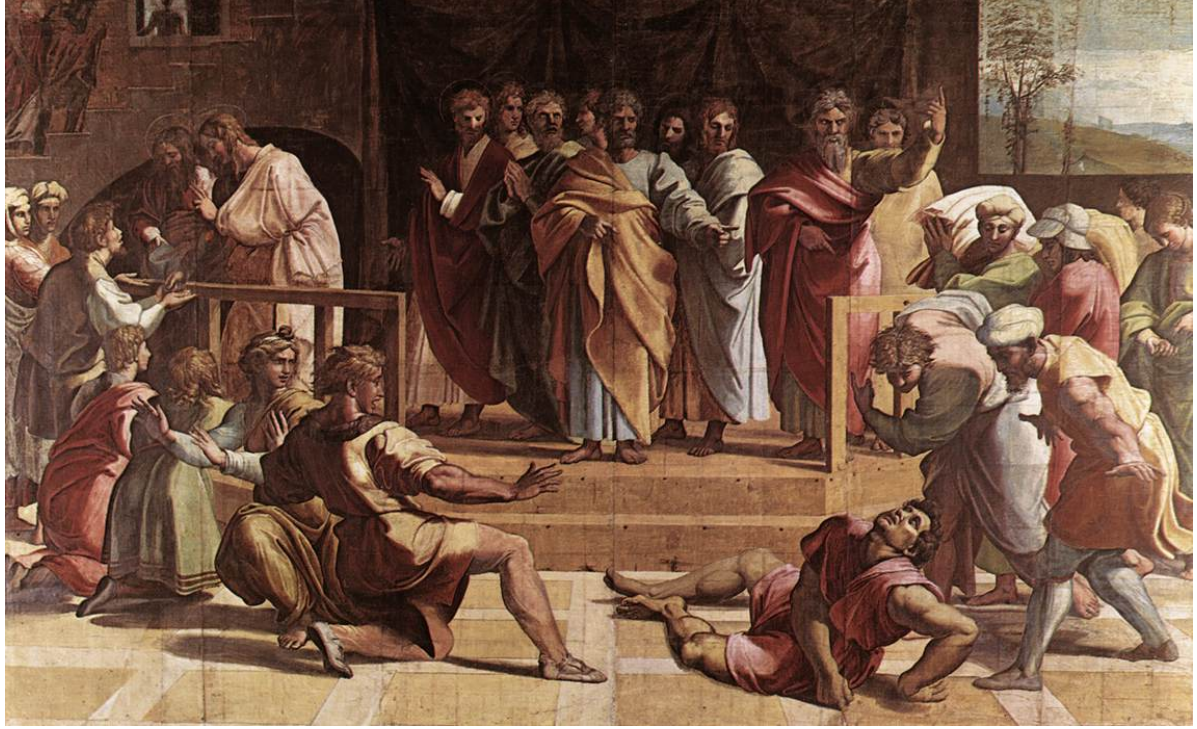


Figure 40: After Raphael, *The Miraculous Draught of Fishes,* ca. 1519, tapestry. London, Victoria and Albert Museum

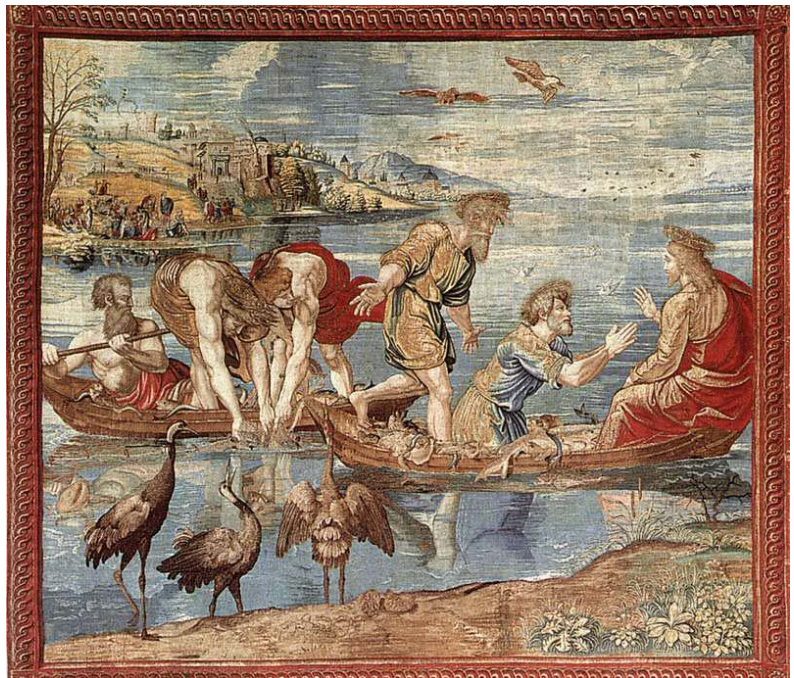


Figure 41: After Raphael, *The Death of Ananias*, 1515, tapestry. London, Victoria and Albert Museum

Figure 42: Detail of Figure 39, *Psyche Taken to a Deserted Mountain*

Figure 43: Detail of Figure 8, *Peasant Wedding Banquet*

Figure 44: Jan van Hemessen, *Christ and the Adulteress*, 1525, oil on panel. New York, Art Market (Cat. No. 2)

Figure 45: Jan van Hemessen, *Calling of St. Matthew*, 1536, oil on panel. Munich, Alte Pinakothek

Figure 46: Maarten de Vos, *The Marriage at Cana*,1592, oil on panel. Antwerp, Onse Lieve Vrouwekathedraal

Figure 47: Pieter Coecke van Aelst,

Wedding Feast at Cana, 1545, pen and ink.
Budapest, Museum der schönen Künste

Figure 48: Dionisio Calvert, *Wedding at Cana*, 1591, pen and ink. London, British Museum

Figure 49: Dirck Vellert, *Wedding at Cana*, 1523, pen and ink. London, British Museum

Figure 50: Anonymous, *Wedding at Cana,* 1500-50, oil on panel. Paris, Louvre

Figure 51: Tintoretto, *The Last Supper,* 1592, oil on canvas. Venice, San Giorgio Maggiore

Figure 52: Cornelis Cornelisz. Buys, *Last Supper*, 1535, oil on panel. Brussels, Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten

Figure 53: Maarten de Vos, *The Last Supper,* 1582, pen and ink. Monaco, Christie's

Figure 54: Pieter Coecke van Aelst, *The Last Supper*, pen and ink. Munich, Staatliche Graphische Sammlung

Figure 55: Jan Bruegel the Elder and Pieter Paul Rubens, *Allegory of Taste,* 1618, oil on panel. Madrid, Museo del Prado

Figure 56: Pieter Bruegel the Elder (after), *The Fat Kitchen,* 1563, engraving. Rotterdam, Musuem Boijmans van Beuningen

Figure 57: Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *Census at Bethlehem*, 1566, oil on panel. Brussels, Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts

Figure 58: Detail of 22, *St. George Kermis*

Detail of Figure 17, *Peasant Dance*

Figure 59: Detail of Figure 17, *Peasant Dance*

Figure 60: Cornelius Bos (after Maarten van Heemskerck): *Triumph of Bacchus*, 1543, engraving. Amsterdam, Rijksprentenkabinet

Figure 61: Jan Sadeler, after Dirck Barendsz, *As the Days of Noe Were,* engraving. Amsterdam, Dr. A. Welcker Collection

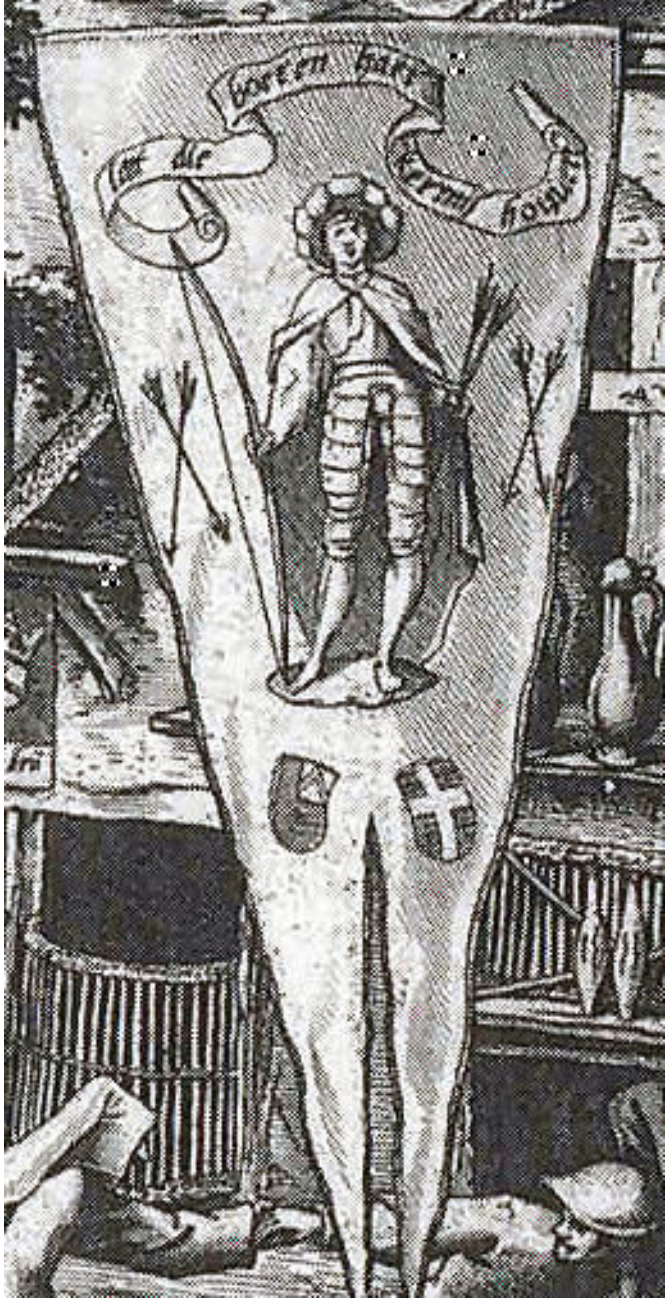


Figure 62: Detail of Figure 22, *St. George Kermis*

Figure 63: Detail of Figure 17, *Peasant Dance*

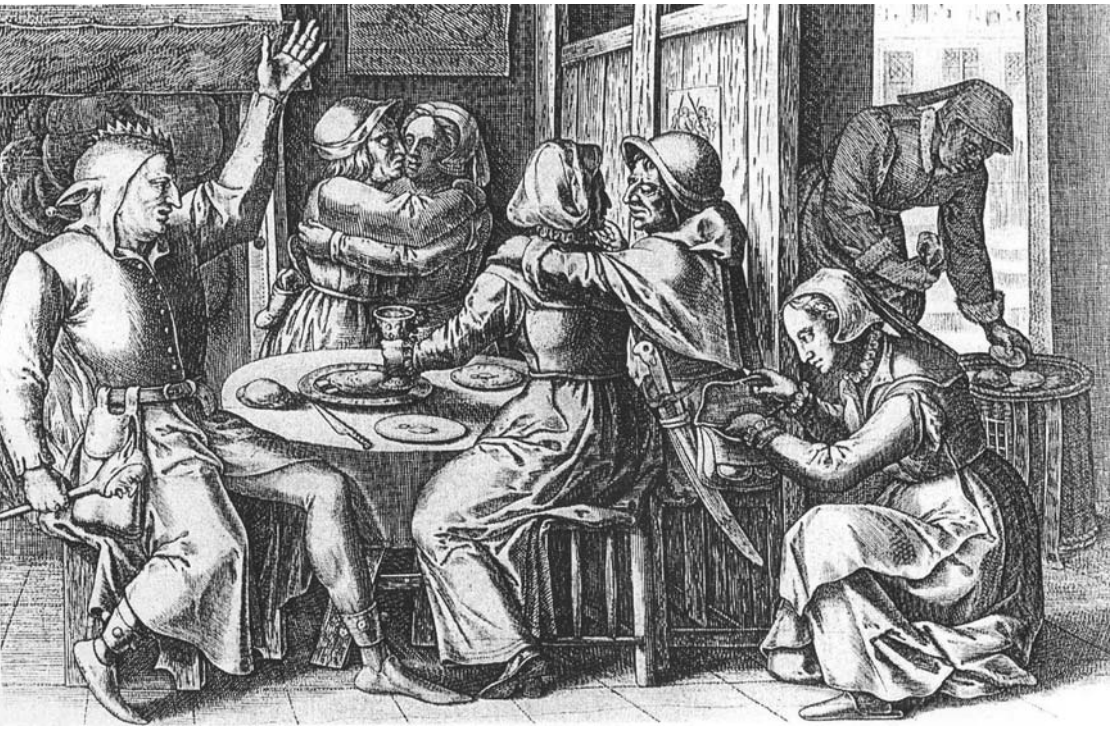


Figure 64: After Cornelis Massys, *Brothel Scene,* engraving. Private collection

Figure 65: 'Fool explaining the heavens to a pensive man,' illustration as reproduced in Sebastian Brant, *Ship of Fools,* New York: Columbia University Press, 1944.

Figure 66: Detail of Figure 17, *Peasant Dance*

Figure 67: Detail of Figure 17, *Peasant Dance*

Figure 68: Pieter Aertsen, *Market Stall*, 1551, oil on panel. Uppsala, Museum Gustavianum

Figure 69: Pieter Aertsen, *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary ,* 1552, oil on panel. Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen

Figure 70: Pieter Aertsen, *Return from a Pilgrimage to St. Anthony*, 1550, oil on panel. Brussels, Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts

Figure 71: *The Abduction of the Sabine Women*, ca. 1550, Flemish tapestry

Figure 72: Maarten de Vos, *St. Paul and the Silversmith Demetrius*, 1568, oil on panel. Brussels, Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts

Figure 73: Detail of Figure 17, *Peasant Dance*

Figure 74: Meister E.S., *St. George with the Stork's Nest*, 1450-67, engraving. Chicago, Art Institute of Chicago

Figure 75: Detail of Figure 17, *Peasant Dance*

Figure 76: Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *The Misanthrope*, 1568. Oil on canvas. Naples, Museo di Capodimonte

Figure 77: Pieter Bruegel the Elder, Detail of *Netherlandish Proverbs*, 1559, oil on panel. Berlin, Staatliche Museen,

Figure 78: Pieter Bruegel, *Beekeepers*, 1568, drawing. Berlin, Staatliche Museen Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Kupferstichkabinett

Figure 79: Leonardo, *St. John the Baptist*, ca. 1513, red chalk on red prepared paper. Varese, Museo del Sacro Monte

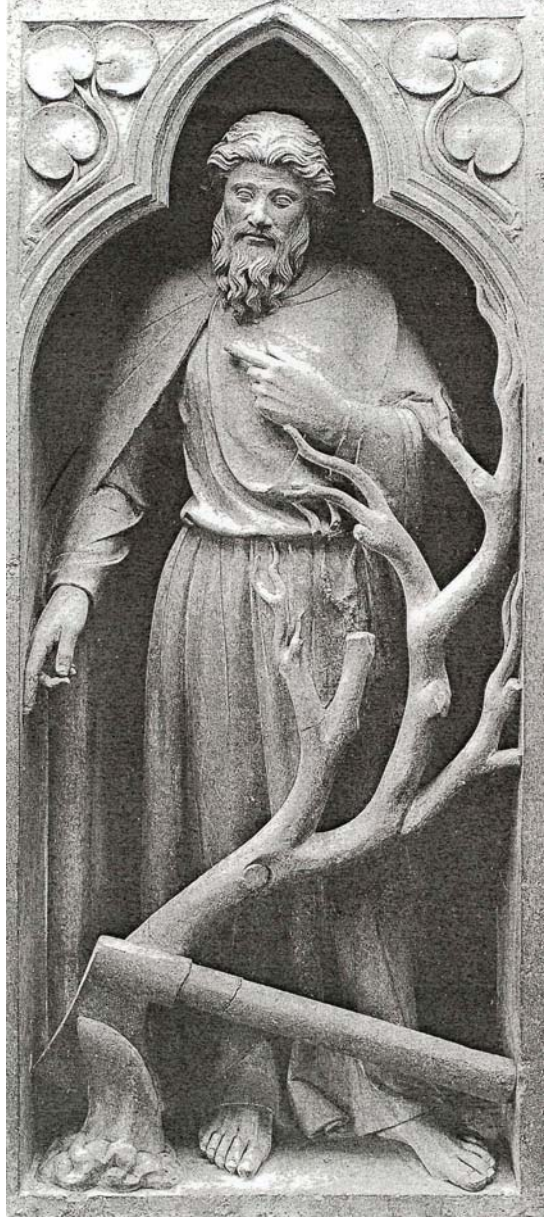


Figure 80: St. John with an ax and dead tree, 14th century, Reims Cathedral

Figure 81: Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *The Blind Leading the Blind*, 1568, distemper on linen. Naples, Museo e Gallerie nazionali di Capodimonte

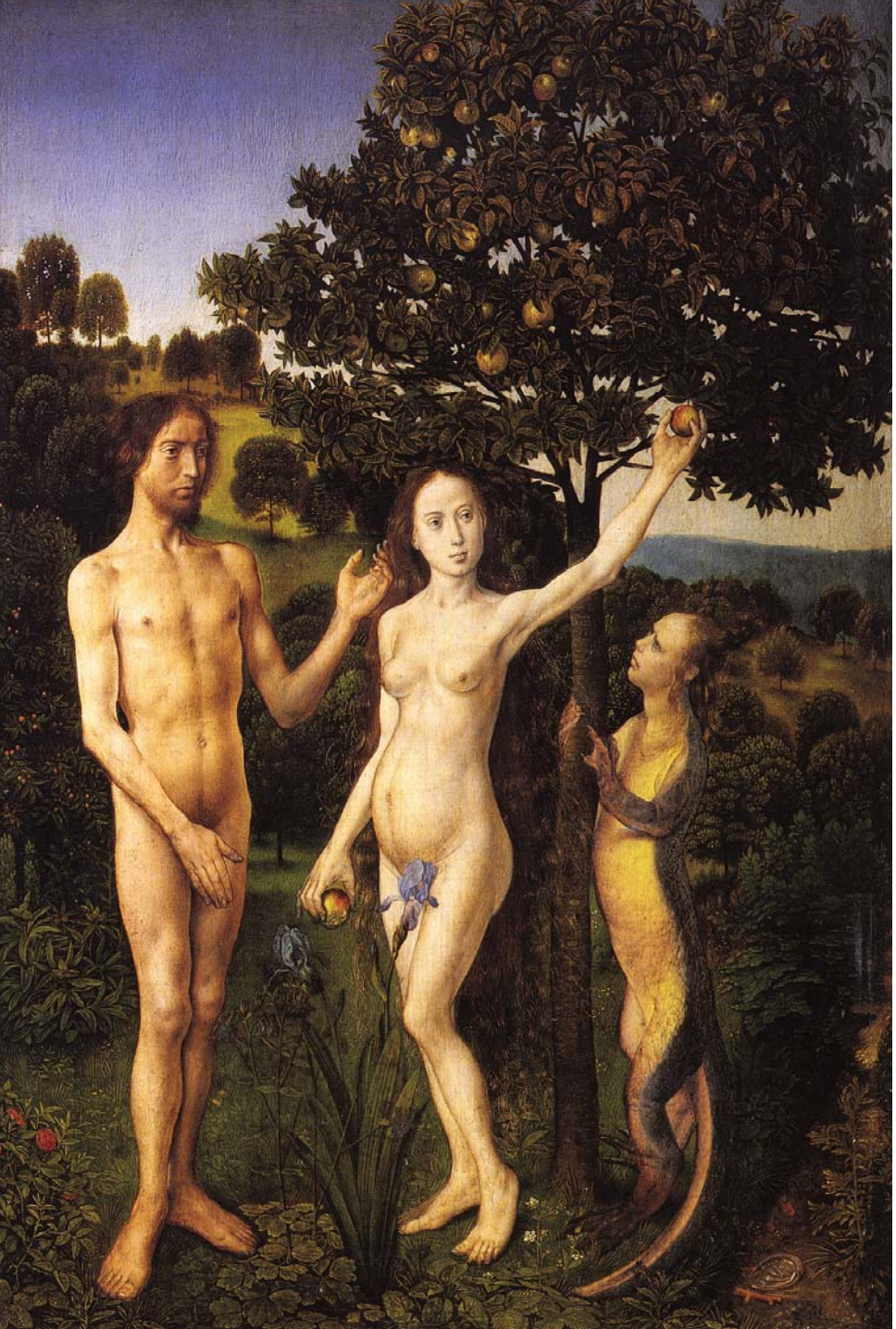


Figure 82: Hugo van der Goes, *Adam and Eve Tempted by the Snake,* 1470, oil on panel. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum

Figure 83: Iillustration to Sebastian Brant's *Der sotten schip oft dat narren schip,* woodcut. *Reproduced from the third edition printed in Antwerp, 1548. Middelburg: Merlijn, 1981.*

Figure 84: Pieter Bruegel the Elder (after), *Festival of Fools*, after 1570, engraving. Los Angeles County Museum

Figure 85: Pieter Bruegel the Elder or Follower, *The Dishonest Merchant*, 1569, engraving. Jacques Lavalleye, *Bruegel and Lucas van Leyden: Complete Engravings, Etchings and Woodcuts,* New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1967

Figure 86: Pieter van der Heyden after Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *Summer*, after 1570, engraving. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art

Figure 87: Pieter van der Heyden after Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *The Battle Between Piggy Banks and Moneychangers*, after 1570, engraving. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art

Figure 88: Detail of Figure 84, *Festival of Fools*

Figure 89: Detail of Figure 60, *Triumph of Bacchus*

Figure 90: Maarten van Heemskerck, *Triumph of Pride*, 1564, engraving. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum

Figure 91: Pieter Bruegel the Elder (after), *Elck*, 1558, engraving. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum

Figure 92: Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *Spring*, 1565, pen and brown ink. Vienna, Graphische Sammlung Albertina

Figure 93: Phillip Galle after Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *Temperance,* after 1570, engraving. Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen

Figure 94: Gerard de Jode after Hans Vredeman de Vries, *History of Daniel Series, Thesaurus Biblicus,* 1579, etching. Antwerpen, Museum Plantin-Moretus

Figure 95: After Frans Floris, *Massacre of the Innocents,* engraving. Universiteit Leiden Prentenkabinet

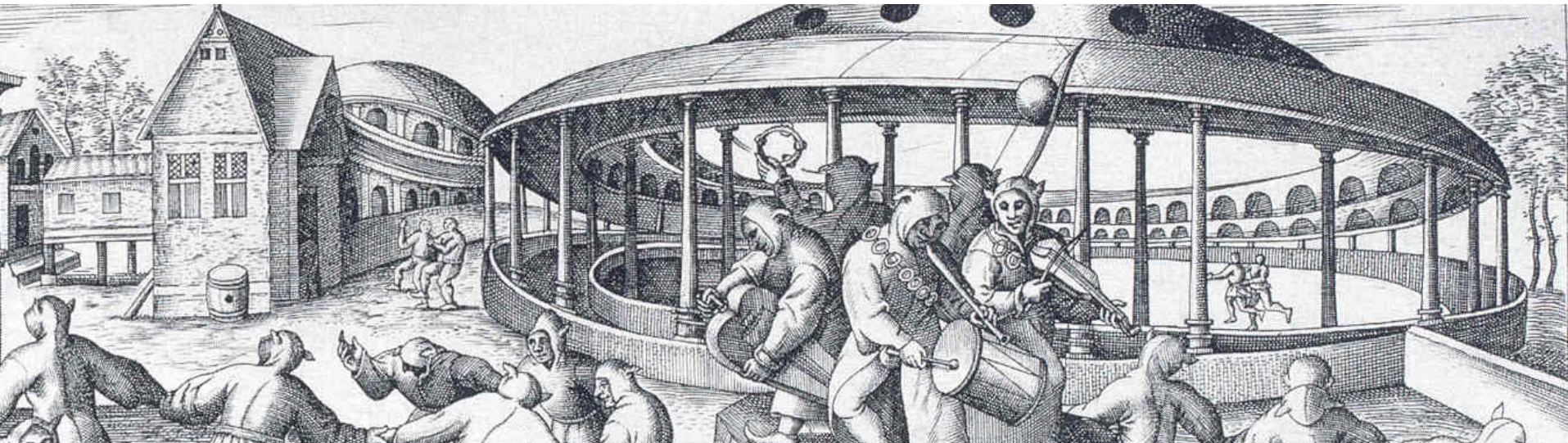


Figure 96: Maarten van Heemskerk (after), *Triumph of Chastity*, 1565, engraving. Chatsworth, Collection of the Duke of Devonshire

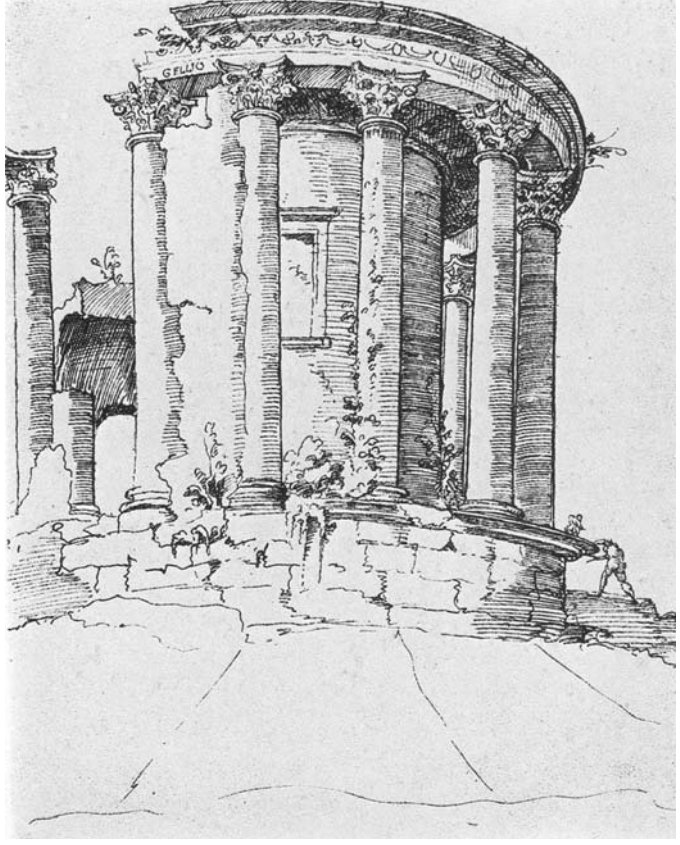


Figure 97: Maarten van Heemskerck, Temple of Vesta, Tivoli, engraving. Berlin, Staatliche Museen Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Kupferstichkabinett

Figure 98: photograph, Arena of Verona, Italy

Figure 99: Anonymous, *The Dean of Renaix*, ca. 1557, engraving.
Brussels, Bibliothéque royale Albert I, print room

eynde ſo dat die kiſte ouer eynde viel in dat graf eñ vlelſpiegel die quã op zĳ voetẽ metter kiſtẽ te ſtaen. Doe ſeydẽ ſi al dye daer bi warẽ, Jaet hẽ ſo ſtaen wãt hi wondlic was in zĳ leuẽ/ wonderlic wil hi zĳ na ſĳn doot. Mdꝰ lieten ſi vlelſpiegel recht int graf ſtaẽ eñ ſi dectẽ dat graf eñ leyden daer op eenẽ ſteen daer op gehouwẽ was een wle hebbende een ſpiegel onder zĳ clauwen alſo hier na gefigureert ſtaet/ ende op den ſteen ſtont gehouwen met geſcriſte. Deſen ſteen en ſal nyemant vhouwen. Hier leet vlelſpieghel begrauen.

EPITAPHIVM.

Noctua & ab ſpeculo vix noxior eutropeluſq;
Depoſuit, teſtans ridiculoſus homo.
Ne ſtat ne ſedeat iaceatq; ferant tumulo eius,
Vel ſeclaris vel ſpiritualis eum
Dormitat in Chriſto cum Chriſti fidelibus hic nam,
Aut cadit aut ſtat hero ſeruus, vt ipſe ſuo.

Ghepint Thantwerpen in die Kape bp my
Michiel van Hoochſtraten.

Figure 100: Thyl's *Uilenspiegel*, woodcut illustration from German version, Strausburg, 1515. London, British Library, c.57.c.23.(1), b6r°

Figure 101: Thyl's *Uilenspiegel*, woodcut illustration from the title page of German version, 1515. London, British Library, c.57.c.23.(1), A1r°

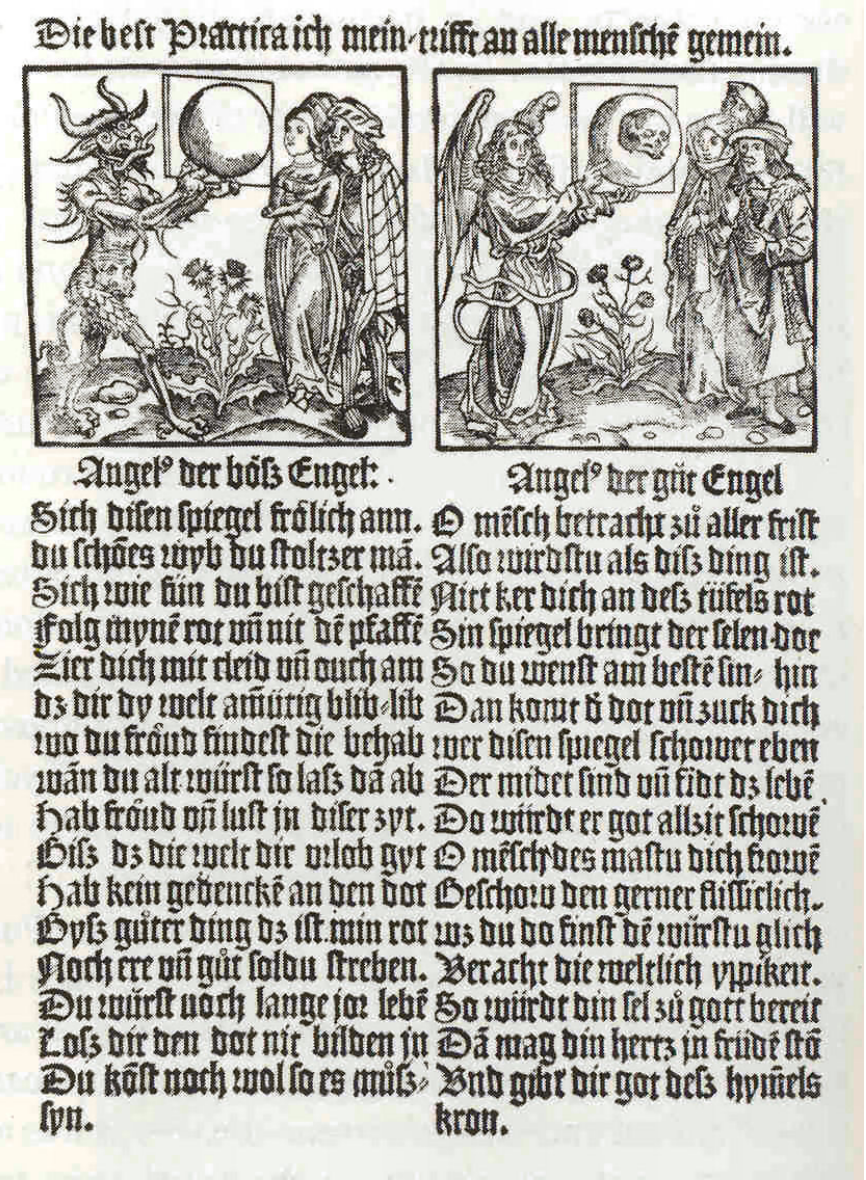
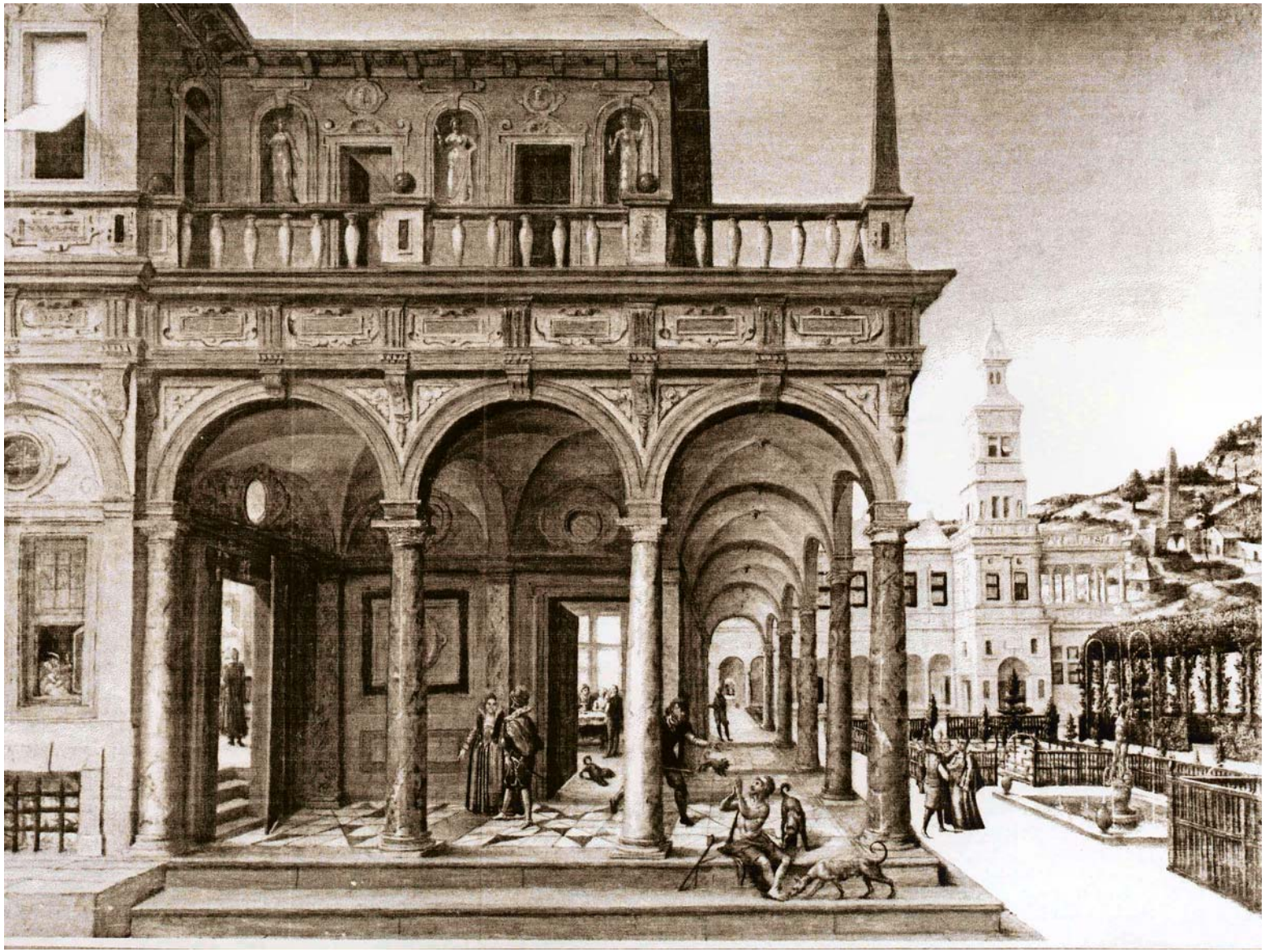


Figure 102: *The Devil's and the Angel's Mirrors*, German woodcut, 1500

Figure 103: Maarten van Heemskerck, Colossal foot with sandal, engraving. Berlin, Staatliche Museen Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Kupferstichkabinett

Figure 104: Albrecht Dürer, illustration of the mirror of vanity from *Der Ritter vom Turm*, 1493, Basel

Figure 105: Maarten van Heemskerck, *Triumph of Envy*, 1564, engraving.
Chatsworth, Collection of the Duke of Devonshire



Figrue 106: Hans Vredeman de Vries, *Lazarus Before the Palace of the Rich Man*, 1583, oil on panel. Leeuwarden, Fries Museum

Figure 107: Marcel Duchamp, *L.H.O.O.Q*, 1919,
pencil on a reproduction of the *Mona Lisa*.
Philadelphia Museum of Art